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PRICE OF MONEY

PLAY :: BY LUKE NORTH

*spared
Anne Hartness Griffis*

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THE
PRICE OF MONEY
A PLAY IN FOUR ACTS

By Luke North

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PERSONS OF THE PLAY

ALLEN MEAD, a broker

MARTIN KANE, his friend

CYRIL THOMAS, a very prominent citizen

JOHN WILSON, the father of a happy home

MARIAN WILSON, his wife

GRACE WILSON, their daughter

TIME AND PLACE

The year 1910 of the Christian era, in Our Town—whose population by the federal census is 218,000, whose bank clearances “attest the soundness of our institutions,” whose building permits “show our marvelous growth,” and whose citizens point with pride to the annual report of the Chamber of Commerce. One morning and two evenings in early summer.

ACT ONE

Scene: Real estate office of Allen Mead on the tenth floor of the Trust building.

The entrance is at the center back. To the left* front are three chairs and an office desk partly hidden by a large screen that gives this corner almost the privacy of a separate room. To right front are stenographer's desk and two chairs. In the center is a table on which are telephone, newspaper, city directory, etc., with a chair at each side. On the walls are county maps and plots of subdivisions. To the right upper are built-in wardrobe and washstand. To left upper are filing cases, safe and another desk.

As the curtain rises

Grace Wilson enters

She is decidedly comely, eighteen, with round, well featured face that expresses intelligence and an even temperament, but her most conspicuous charms are youth and freshness.

She carries an armful of loosely gathered flowers which she lays on the table while doffing her hat and placing it in the wardrobe. She stops to fix her hair

* Right and Left are from viewpoint of the audience.

at the glass, then returns to the flowers which she separates into two bunches, placing one on Mead's desk and one on her own. Now she hesitates, blushes at her temerity, and takes the bunch from Mead's desk back to the table. Surveying the room thus florally decked—it does not please her and she replaces the doubtful bouquet. It is better so. She starts to work—but, no; it might seem forward. Again she takes the flowers from his desk—then shakes her head. It doesn't suit that way. She is about to replace them when the idea of a compromise occurs. Taking the flowers from her own desk she combines them with the others and leaves one large bunch on the table. This proves satisfactory, and with a sigh of relief she starts to work again. Presently she lapses into musing:

Grace. Mother will make an exception of him. . . . He is not like other men (*Her reverie is broken by the door opening sharply.*)

Martin Kane enters

He is of slender build and average height, with sharply-cut features, dandified manners and garb; much older than the 30 years he feels, and some older than the 40 which he looks.

Kane (*bowing elaborately and jauntily*). Good morning, my dear.

Grace (*rising; aside*). O, not your dear. (*Severely*) Mr. Mead is not in.

Kane. Ah, I'm too early for him. That's lucky. I always was lucky.

Grace. He has not come down yet.

Kane (*advancing*). Am I invited to remain till he comes?

Grace. You will find the morning paper on the table. (*Resumes her seat*)

Kane. I would rather talk with you.

Grace (*icily*). Won't you be seated? (*Returns to her work*).

Kane (*aside*). It's rather chilly for this time of the year. (*Turning*) What an effective way your hair is arranged. Must take you a long while every morning.

Grace (*off her guard an instant*). O, no—(*then half-angrily, she turns to her keys and thumps furiously*).

Kane (*admiring*). Isn't she graceful? (*Bends close*) Do your eyes match your hair or contrast with it?

Grace (*despite herself looking up at him; then sharply turning her back*). I am very busy.

Kane. So am I. You're the prettiest girl I have met in this town. Let me see your eyes again—come.

Grace (*hears a step; rises*). Don't! (*Goes to door*)

Kane (*following*). Don't means Do (*He has his hand almost to her waist when the door opens to the left; they are to the right of it*).

Allen Mead enters

He is 30 and looks it—robust, rather carelessly dressed, thoughtful but optimistic in speech and manner.

Grace (*steps forward*). Here is a— someone to see you, Mr. Mead. (*Returns to her desk*)

Kane. Allen, my boy.

Mead. Well, well, this *is* a surprise I was thinking of you only the other day. When did you arrive? (*They cross the room toward Mead's desk*).

Kane. Been here two days. Have taken in the whole town.

Mead. I'll warrant you have—all the highlights, at any rate. Come here and sit down (*places chair for Kane, opens desk; both seated*). Well, has our town grown any in three years. You found it quieter, didn't you. Lid on pretty tight, they tell me—

Kane. Tell you?

Mead. If they didn't I'd never know. Let me open a letter or two, Martin. (*He does so*)

Kane. Reformed, eh? Church or skirt?

Mead (*laughing as he scans letters*). Neither. Just got tired of having a good time. Never could get any amusement out of it . . . Hope you'll stay awhile, Martin.

Kane. Don't know yet . . . So Allen Mead is leading the quiet life. I expected as much.

Mead. There's a vacant desk here. You must make this your headquarters.

Kane. Thanks, old man. I'll use it.

Mead. But how will New York worry along without you?

Kane. O, Morgan can hold it down for a little while.

Mead. Is there anything he can't hold?

Kane. Whatever the dear people might care to withhold.

Mead It isn't the people; it's the system. That Wall street clique may have brains and reach, but it needn't have. The system would pour the nation's wealth in its lap if Morgan and his bunch were marble statues decorating a bottomless reservoir.

Kane. They are marble, Allen, but I'm not so sure they're decorative. However, I never heard Morgan speak unkindly of you.

Mead (*laughing*). Probably not. But tell me, are you still in the paint business, Martin—red paint?

Kane. O, I get around a little. I like to raise the lid and see the real works. Struck Tony's last night. Say, there's a quiet place for your money.

Mead. Not *my* money.

Kane. That's right; never spend your own money. But the man you're selling a lot—take him there. I've

a customer for some Arizona mines. Took him there and opened velvet water. He thinks I'm a prince. I am. He buys the stocks.

Mead. Are they good?

Kane. Maybe. They look pretty.

Mead. There's nothing in that sort of thing, Martin.

Kane (*drily*). Nothing but money . . . I'd rather juggle insurance funds or railroad stocks, but I don't seem to get in on those big games. Fifty thousand or so a year has to do me.

Mead. O, I suppose there is little choice—if you must have easy money. Probably you never considered the fact that nothing is any good to you unless you give an equivalent for it.

Kane. That's out of print, Allen. There's a revised edition.

Mead. I dare say—

Kane. Yes—the line of least resistance.

Mead. That's as old as the Vedas, but we don't know which it is yet . . . Let me make a note on this letter for the girl. (*Writing*)

Kane. Where did you get it, Allen?

Mead. What?

Kane (*pointing to Grace*). Your taste in dress goods is improving.

Mead (*not pleased*). You mean the stenographer, Miss Wilson?

Kane. Well, I'm not a mind reader. I couldn't guess her name. She has the looks. Do you know she reminds me of the woman I met at Tony's last night—something about her—

Mead. Cut that, Martin, or you and I'll quarrel. You can't compare Miss Wilson—

Kane. Indeed, indeed! Is it so, alas?

Mead (*vigorously*). I mean it, Martin.

Kane. All right, old fellow. No harm. I apologize. But let me tell you about that woman I met at Tony's. She surprised me. Much older than your (*a gesture from Mead*). O, I'm not coupling them. But a certain air about her. Carries her head that way. Intelligent—something refined in her manner, you know. Now I've been around and met a woman or two—

Mead. Scores of them, no doubt—of a kind.

Kane. O, they're all alike—

Mead. Not for a minute—

Kane. Let me finish. They're all alike in this respect—they need the money.

Mead. But they won't all pay the world's price for it.

Kane. Won't they. Let me tell you a few things about women.

Mead. Why can't you forget them? [I did.

Kane. I don't want to, and they wouldn't let me if

Mead. Well I'm not running after them.

Kane. That's good; now they'll run after you.

Mead. I have a better opinion of women than that.

Kane. H'm—that's serious. Try an antidote.

Mead. Were you ever serious, Martin?

Kane. I can't remember.

Mead (*laughing*). What's your antidote?

Kane. Fall madly in love with two or three of them.

Mead. About one would do me.

Kane. Perhaps it would—if you found her indispensable to your life's happiness and all that, and told her about it—

Mead. Well?

Kane. And you found her an iceberg the next day.

Mead. Yes—if—

Kane. It isn't *if*. It works that way. When she's got you body and soul then you've lost her.

Mead. I shan't lose many that way.

Kane. There's no other way to lose them. Indifference attracts them, but they've no use for the conquered, nor for one who doesn't ceaselessly conquer them.

Mead. A good many will go unconquered if they wait for me. I have other things to do.

Kane. For instance—?

Mead. Well, it would keep one reasonably occupied to conquer himself a little.

Kane. That's work, the other's play, and the game's interesting.

Mead. And doesn't require much brains, I fancy.

Kane. The fewer the better. Look at me.

Mead (*laughing*). When I do I see a libertine.

Kane. It takes a libertine to understand women.

Mead. Is there a penalty on not understanding them?

Kane. You're at their mercy then, and they haven't any.

Mead. Your view is superficial, Martin.

Kane. It's subject is superficial.

Mead. O, I don't believe woman is a mere bundle of nerves and emotions.

Kane. Surely not. There's the lingerie, the hosiery, the tailor-made skirt, and the rouge.

Mead (*laughing*). Martin, you're a man of your own time. In you civilization is personified—its shallowness I mean, if you'll stand for that.

Kane. My carapace of self-esteem is impenetrable, Allen. Let it go that I'm in tune with the superficialities of civilization, and you—with its illusions.

Mead (*laughing*). O, very well. (*Thoughtfully*) What are its realities, I wonder?

Kane (*quickly*). Dollars!!

Mead. Yes; it's either to be sex mad or money mad.

Kane. It isn't either; it's both—if one has spunk enough to be mad. They're inseparable, only the money must come first.

Mead. One might scorn them both as passions.

Kane. And be a dreamer. (*Suspiciously*) Allen, I believe you've got it.

Mead. What?

Kane. The dream bug. You're going to change things—revolutionize society, alas!

Mead. It needs it, doesn't it?

Kane. Not so much as you need the money, my boy.

Mead. O, I won't starve.

Kane. But she has to dress.

Mead. I might find one who would care to dream a little herself instead of dress. O, the world isn't as bad as you picture it.

Kane. It's worse, or better. I like the game as it is, and this is how it is: Money will go so near getting you any woman you want, and the lack of it so near losing you any woman you wish to hold or win, that the exceptions are not worth considering.

Mead. But there are exceptions.

Kane. I'd rather admit than argue it, but the world isn't run on exceptions.

Mead (*teasingly*). What is it run on, Martin?

Kane (*tersely*). Money.

Mead. God! you're right—almost. But money shall not run my life.

Kane. Wake up, Allen. Woman needs the money and man must get it for her. Even her instincts are subordinate to it.

Mead. You're language isn't very choice, Martin, but it depicts the economic situation.

Kane. I'm picking my facts, not my language. And the big fact is that woman is the property of man.

Mead. We're changing all that.

Kane. You can't—woman won't let you.

Mead. She's being emancipated.

Kane. From man's tyranny, I suppose?

Mead (*smiling*). That's the battle cry.

Kane. You're an honorary member of the League?

Mead. Not yet.

Kane. You're eligible. Allen, you're about the age of this civilization—and share its dreams.

Mead. O, I'm not as old as civilization.

Kane. Not as old, but as young. Civilization is at the age of feminine maturity.

Mead. That's not so bad. Where did you get that idea?

Kane. It's out of my favorite book of fiction.

Mead. It sounds like fiction.

Kane. It's life's fiction—which you won't read till you have lost the illusions of this woman's civilization of show.

Mead. Yes, it's mostly show—brass buttons, platitudes, and millinery—on the outside, but there's a soul within.

Kane. I haven't found it.

Mead. It isn't on the surface.

Kane. Woman is. When she becomes a reality to you instead of an ideal you'll find the world is run by her.

Mead. Man plans and shapes.

Kane. Only the details. Woman plots the ensemble, and has her way.

Mead. Then she's not mere property.

Kane. She's the queen bee of the world's hive. Man is always the slave of his property.

Mead. Women are tired of being property. They demand recognition as individuals.

Kane. Just a few. The rest of them want to rule—and they know how.

Mead. Martin, you're a cynic.

Kane. Allen, you're—thirty.

Mead. Women are gaining the ballot.

Kane. What of that?

Mead. Men rule that way.

Kane. Men don't rule at all.

Mead. They vote—

Kane. As money dictates. Money is on the throne and woman is the power behind it.

Mead. See here, you're getting tangled. You said women's instincts were subordinate to money. Now you say she is the power behind the throne of money.

Kane. Allen, you're too serious.

Mead. But which is the real power — woman or money?

Kane (*nonchalantly*). O, both, of course. You wouldn't suspect me of lying?

Mead. I wouldn't suspect you of anything else, when you're talking such—

Kane. Call it jargon: talk is all jargon, for the purpose of provoking thirst. Anything to drink?

Mead (*offering cigar*). Take a smoke and forget the drink. I suppose you've reached the vicious circle?

Kane (*declining*). No—cigarettes is the way I'm dying. (*Lights one*) Yes, the serpent gets his tail in his mouth—her, I mean. Woman is caught in her own toils. You get the money first and then the woman gets you.

Mead. Yes, I guess that's jargon.

Kane. All talk is jargon, except when money talks.

Mead. That's the greatest jargon of all . . . Why don't you write fiction, Martin?

Kane. Too busy living it. Life is the most fascinating fiction I ever read.

Mead. Transcribe some of it into a quick seller.

Kane. I can get the money easier.

Mead. You'd make a good novelist.

Kane. No. I haven't enough illusions, and no urge to re-make women or men. They suit me as they are.

Mead (*seriously*). There are deeper things in life, Martin, than your contact with it seems to have disclosed—or it wouldn't be worth while.

Kane (*musingly*). Who said it was worth while? . . . But I'm still learning—

Mead. It's worth while to learn.

Kane. There's that woman I met at Tony's—

Mead. She "got you," it seems.

Kane. She awakened my curiosity. But no woman is going to get me.

Mead. O, maybe you're not fireproof. But tell me about her. I know you're dying to.

Kane (*readily*). The woman who did me the distinguished honor of accepting my money last night was a unique experience. She'd revise some of your notions, Allen. You couldn't have told her from a princess out of a story book.

Mead. Young?

Kane. Perhaps forty, but looking twenty-seven—modest, dainty, nothing coarse, no language—a real lady—

Mead. I respect your judgement in a good many things, Martin—but ladies! O, of course, they're all perfect ladies; the other kind are content to be women.

Kane (*seriously*). The kind is one. (*Lightly, looking about*) Where do you keep it?

Mead. Not a drop in the house.

Kane. You used to keep a bottle—of the real stuff.

Mead. It ran dry the day you left.

Kane. Well, you know the alternative.

Mead. I suppose I do. When Martin Kane comes to town it's a drink every once in so often.

Kane. Honestly, now, Allen, aren't you thirsty after all this highbrow gabble?

Mead (*closing desk*). Come along, old man. I'll see that you don't die of thirst in this town. (*Both go.*

Calls from doorway): I'll be right back, Miss Wilson.

Grace. I hope he won't bring Mr. Impudence back with him. . . . He's not really dangerous—only conceited . . .

Cyril Thomas enters

He is large, stolid, pompous and eminently respectable; partly bald, well dressed, and entirely serious—a thoroly practical man. There are no frills or nonsense about him. He means business—eats, sleeps,

and dreams it. Being of the masculine gender, however, his eye is taken at once by the dainty figure at the typewriter.

Thomas. I called to see Mr. Mead.

Grace. He has just stepped out, but will return soon.

Thomas. Ahem—I won't be able to wait. Tell him Mr. Thomas looked in and have him call me up.

Grace (*rising and getting papers*). Mr. Thomas? O, then I have some work for you.

Thomas. I don't know anything about it—(*he has been ogling her, and now hesitates*). I'll look at it.

Grace (*handing papers*). The clerk ordered it.

Thomas. Ah, yes; the contract. How much is it?

Grace (*shrinking from his steady gaze*). Two dollars is the regular charge, I believe.

Thomas (*hands bill from wallet*). Here is ten dollars.

Grace. O, I have no change!

Thomas (*with very meaning look*). You can keep the change.

Grace (*shrinks, reddens, hands back bill, goes to her seat and turns her back*).

Thomas (*lays bill on table beside her*). I know that young lady stenographers do not receive large salaries and yet their expenses are considerable. You will oblige me, Miss—

Grace (*recoiling; hotly*). What right have you!—

Thomas (*seeing his mistake*). I meant no offense, my dear young lady. I'm afraid you're too independent to prosper. Most young ladies are glad to accept a little help.

Grace (*savagely*). Save your money for them. I have all I want.

Thomas (*retreating to the door*). H'm'm—. You will not forget my message to Mr. Mead, my dear young lady? (*While speaking he opens the door; turns to have a parting stare at Grace. Absent-mindedly he reaches to open the door again, clumsily stumbles against it and almost falls, making a noisy and undignified Exit.*)

Grace (*laughs heartily—then musing*). I'm getting lots of experience. It wouldn't do to tell mother. She'd only worry and want me to stay at home. She's suspicious of every man I meet—

Mead and Kane re-enter

The latter is still talking about the woman of Tony's. They go to Mead's desk.

Kane. She's a different type—

Grace (*to Mead*). Mr. Thomas was here. He wants you to let him know when you can see him.

Mead. Thank you. Call him up now, please. I'll wait for him here. It's Cyril Thomas—in the Security building. (*Passes on to desk and opens it*). Go ahead, Martin. A new type, you were saying.

Grace looks up number in book, telephones as directed, then goes back to typewriter.

Kane (who has preceded Mead to desk). I wish you could see her. You'd change your mind.

Mead. O, pshaw! And you from New York. A woman who hangs around Tony's—

Kane. Nothing of the kind. She's never seen there except on private, personal business—and she's expensive. They call her up at her home where she's entertaining her lady friends with a pink tea, no doubt—or at the fashionable mother's club where she's reading a paper on home culture, probably. She comes in a taxi, is seen by no one but the new gentleman friend. Queenly she receives his largess, then back she goes to her mother's meeting or social function. Sometimes a luncheon or a supper, but it's always private—for two only. She's exclusive and particular.

Mead. Is she good looking?

Kane (*hesitantly*). Strange—you know I can't remember that.

Mead. Well, if it's all true, how do you account for it?

Kane. She needs the money.

Mead. Isn't it hell that she does?

Kane. I found it quite the reverse—an agreeable surprise.

Mead. But the conditions that drive such a woman to get the money in that way. Isn't it fiendish?

Kane. O, I'm not bothering about conditions. It takes all my time to get the money. You're tainted with socialism.

Mead. I can't help thinking—

Kane. Don't do it. Cut all that, or you for the poorhouse.

Mead. There are worse things than the poorhouse.

Kane. I wonder what they are?

Mead. Mental prostitution, for one. It's worse than physical.

Kane. We're all prostitutes. It's an age of prostitution. That's its price for money.

Mead. I don't want money at that price.

Kane. Well, you have three other chances. You can inherit it, find a gold mine, or turn burglar.

Mead. I can go without it.

Kane. That's the one thing you can't do. Much or little, it's money first. Now listen to me, Allen: Socialism is a good fad for the rich, but you need the money, and to get enough will take all your head power. Of course, a man wants recreation. Well, come with me to Tony's; maybe she has a sister.

Mead. O, that kind of woman doesn't interest me.

Kane. I tell you she's not that kind. She's a para-

gon of decorum and respectability.

Mead. But you bought her. She sells herself.

Kane. Everything is bought and sold—and every one.

Mead. What is purchasable is negligible. And a woman who is bought—

Kane. You meet and respect them every day.

Mead. Those who marry for money? You are drawing fine distinctions.

Kane. It is you who are drawing distinctions. I'd bunch the whole matter and say that women commit matrimony for money.

Mead. Some marry for love.

Kane. None do. Marriage is a contract. Men marry to gain the exclusive use of a woman. Sometimes they get it and sometimes they don't. Women marry to be kept.

Mead. Your language is coarse.

Kane. It's true. Love is one thing, a contract is another.

Mead. Well, it takes more than money to gain some women. There are women and women.

Kane. And words and words. You're talking psychology or something, my boy. I can see your finish—and you needing the money for your woman or woman. It's time some one threw a life line to you. You're in deep water.

Mead. I'm learning to swim.

Kane. It's pleasanter to float. What are you doing to-night?

Mead. Busy to-night. But maybe a little trip with you wouldn't hurt very much.

Kane. Blow away some of those cobwebs.

Mead. Tomorrow night, say?

Kane. Any time.

Mead. Providing you lunch at the club with me to-day.

Kane. Consider it settled. But, say—I'm curious—this Miss—what's her name?

Mead. Miss Wilson? She's not every man's prey.

Kane. Is this the proprietor talking?

Mead. Not at all. But she's young, and has a world of hypocrisy to face. If you fell in love with her and she with you, I'd have nothing to say.

Kane. Your magnanimity is startling, Allen.

Mead. O, you know what I mean, she's no match for you.

Kane. Any woman at any age is more than a match for any man.

Mead. Perhaps—if he doesn't use a club.

Kane. Never used a club in my life, Allen.

Mead. I'm not so sure of that. Society's double

standard of morality is as powerful as it is deceitful. It's a masculine advantage when not a club.

Kane. And maintained by women. Well, well, I wouldn't hurt the little lady. But she mustn't turn her big orbs on me. I'm susceptible, you know.

Mead (*laughingly*). I'll caution her about that. Here, read a bit while I get off some letters. (*Hands book; takes letters to Grace*). You'll find directions at the bottom of these. We'll let the rest go. . . . That's a fine bunch of flowers.

Grace. Isn't it? They're from Aunt Lucy's. She has stacks of them in her yard—you ought to see them.

Mead. I'd like to. You must take me there sometime—won't you?

Grace. That would be fun.

Mead. Say Sunday?

Grace. If mother hasn't some other plans. I'll let you know. (*Turns over the letters*)

Mead. Don't forget it.

Grace. I won't. (*Scanning letters*) What's this? I can't make it out—

Mead (*bending low*). Nor I—let me see. (*Perhaps their heads are a little closer than necessary, as the door opens and*

Thomas re-enters

He stands at the door an instant and observes that Mead's arm is—well—

Thomas (*clears his throat*). Good morning.

Mead (*surprised*). O, that you, Mr. Thomas. (*Goes forward*)

Thomas. I received your note about the lot on D street. You have a purchaser for it?

Mead. Yes, I have his deposit and have given him a ten day's option. He'll pay \$57,000, if the title is guaranteed.

Thomas. There's no trouble about the title. But \$57,000—that's too low. I can do better.

Mead. Why, that's a thousand more than your listed price of a month ago. It's not three years since I bought it for you at \$16,000. I did better than your listed price.

Thomas. But that price was based on values before the D street car line was assured. I have a better offer.

Mead. I have passed my word to the party.

Thomas. One has to go slow and consider his interests. I am a man of family. (*They are both at desk*)

Mead (*introducing*). This is my old friend, Mr. Kane of New York.

Kane. O, not so old, Allen.

Mead. Old in sin, I mean. You won't deny that. Mr. Thomas, a client of mine.

Kane. I'm glad to meet you, Mr. Thomas.

Thomas. Good day, sir. (*All three are seated*)

Mead (*handing paper to Thomas*). Here's the memoranda of the option.

Thomas *puts on his glasses and reads.*

Mead. What do you think, Martin—isn't that a good increase—from \$16000 to \$57,000 in less than three years?

Kane. Very good. After all, the real estate game is the safest. Everybody works for the landowner. It's surer than the Kitty in a poker game, and just as profitable.

Thomas (*looking over his glasses*). I must really disapprove of hearing it called a game, Mr. Kane. I regard real estate as the very basis of wealth. (*Reads again*)

Mead. And its private ownership the basis of poverty
It's unearned increment—

Kane. O, cut the economics, Allen.

Thomas (*who has caught only a word here and there*). Ah, you speak of poverty and economy. I quite agree with you, gentlemen. Economy is the sovereign remedy for poverty. It is very painful to witness the extravagance of our lower classes. (*Reads again*)

Mead. Yes, you ought to see our lower classes flying around in their autos, Martin. Theater parties, wine suppers, liveried servants, Tony's—every night when the day's work is done. From factory and store to ten course dinners and joy rides.

Kane (*enjoys the irony of this, but regrets the evident sincerity beneath it*). Let it go, Allen, let it go. You can't better it. How is real estate in this city, Mr. Thomas?

Thomas (*taking off his glasses*). A very good field for investment—if one doesn't buy on margins. I'm glad to see our young friend here isn't given to such dangerous practices.

Kane. O, it behooves him to play safe now. There's going to be a wedding in his neighborhood.

Thomas. Indeed.

Mead. You're wrong, Martin. I don't believe in the institution of marriage.

Kane. Good boy—nor do I.

Thomas (*greatly shocked*). Not believe in the institution of marriage, gentlemen? I'm sure you must be joking.

Mead. Kane is—all life's a joke to him. But I'm serious enough.

Kane. Yes, he's serious—more than enough.

Thomas. You don't really think we should do away with the sacred institution of marriage, Mr. Mead?

Mead. We are doing away with it pretty fast—if you read the papers, or look around your neighborhood, or consider my friend Kane and his life. And if you judge an institution by its results, I can't find much to say

for marriage. It seems to separate men and women instead of drawing them into closer sympathy.

Kane. Closer sympathy between men and women! He'd like to join east and west! Don't you know that men and women are natural born enemies?

Thomas (*sententiously*). Woman is man's helpmate, Mr. Kane.

Kane. Ah, I forgot that one. I thought it was check mate. But you're right—its helpmate, Allen.

Mead. Not very often in married life. The chains bear too heavily.

Thomas. There are many happily united couple, I am sure.

Mead. I am not so sure. There are some possibly.

Kane. Show me.

Mead. But many or few, the happiness of a couple is due to the natural harmony between them which persists in spite of the chains.

Kane. Harmony between men and women!

Mead. As a rule men and women begin to tire of each other very soon after the institution of marriage has welded them for better or worse . . . Of course, you fellows who flit around from one woman to another and never get settled in your sex relations—

Thomas (*sputtering*). Wh—wh—at! How!

Mead. Pardon me, Mr. Thomas, I thought you'd know that I was alluding only to my friend, the rake.

Thomas (*mollified*). Ah—well. But aren't you rather severe on your friend?

Mead. Not at all. He has the confidence of his sins.

(**Kane bows facetiously**) The inordinate pride of them, I mean . . . But I think it would be better to mate permanently early in life, so that the sex nature should be tranquil and its energies go out in other directions. Life would be calmer and progress swifter.

Kane. What dreams do come!

Mead. Yes, monogamy is a dream to this age. Marriage has perverted the natural order.

Kane. Monotony is not the natural order.

Mead. Must man be whipped to keep him awake?

Kane. He'd stagnate were his sex nature quiescent.

Mead. That's as true as that idleness would ensue were the whip of poverty abated. It's the lashing of human nature by sex and by poverty that holds it down to the trivial and exhausts its power prematurely. I'm not so sure that monogamy is the natural order, but it's the human ideal.

Kane. And he needing the money! Allen, you'll drive me to drink—or to think.

Mead. Impossible, in either case.

Thomas (*sententiously*). Marriage is the institution of monogamy, gentlemen.

Mead. That's only its sham. It's a property institution, based on slavery, maintained by prostitution, and resulting in secret promiscuity.

Kane. Well, it never troubled me very much.

Mead. It never had a moral restraint on any one.

Kane. Why bother then?

Mead. O, its deceits! its hidden skeletons! its coarseness! the enmities it nurses, and the ostracism it visits on frankness and decency!

Kane. And you're going to cure all that?

Mead. Marriage is wearing out itself.

Thomas. I never heard such sentiments. They do you small credit, Mr. Mead.

Mead. I should think a man would want a free woman for a life partner. You can chain a woman, but you can't chain her affections. I don't want a chained slave in the house with me, nor would I be chained.

Kane. Hear him talk. You think women have wings, Allen, but they haven't.

Mead. They might grow wings in time—and men, too, if we loosened the hands of the dead from their lives. Our progress is lopsided. We talk across continents by wireless and ride in autos and airships, yet we are still trying to regulate our social life by the laws of Moses.

Thomas. But if men and women were free to separate at will—!

Mead. Then they'd separate decently and kindly, without all the lying and scandal of divorce which now keep many together thru years of wrangling and deceit. When the ban of social ostracism is removed from the free couple the element of natural selection will assert itself and there will be fewer separations than now.

Kane. You're a little previous, Allen—about 500 years—that's all.

Thomas. I cannot endorse your unorthodox views. The church and state alike rest upon it. Without marriage the home would be insecure, and the foundation of the Republic is the home—the sanctity of the home, I may say.

Kane. There you are, Allen—the sanctity of the home and the foundations of the republic. What are you going to do about them?

Mead. My guess is that sanctified homes are pretty scarce in your neighborhood, Martin.

Kane. Don't flatter me to my face, Allen.

Mead. The home is passing as an institution. The individual cookstove is going out. Apartment houses, restaurants, hotels, tenements, cafeterias, are destroying the old home life. It's a big step toward democracy.

Thomas. The abolition of the home a step toward democracy! Do you think so?

Mead. Caste is the enemy of democracy, and caste is rooted in the exclusiveness of the home life and circle. With the home will go caste—if we ever do cease our worship of wealth and brass buttons.

Kane. In the year 3000, Allen.

Mead. I'm only looking at the trend of things.

Kane. You're looking too far ahead—and needing the money, which is nearby.

Thomas. Yet in the suburbs are miles of small homes, the cottages of our working classes.

Mead (drily). Mr. Thomas is an authority on suburban mortgages, Martin.

Kane. Indeed; how reassuring.

Thomas. I have some rather good investments in that line.

Mead. About 90 per cent of the suburban property is mortgaged. I handle a good deal of that business.

Thomas. Quite true, and you are thus in a position to corroborate my statement that we have still a large population of home living and home loving people.

Kane. There he has you, Allen. So many mortgages, so many homes.

Mead. O, hell! Martin—a mortgage isn't a home.

Kane. Well, don't swear about it. Keep sunny if you want the money. If one mortage won't make a happy home several will—and all bearing—what is the rate?

Thomas. Ah, the rate is not so good. As you say, one must have a good many mortgages—

Kane. Well, at that, the proper number of mortgages will produce a happy home.

Mead. You're a fiend, Martin.

Kane. Absolutely, Allen. Now, I'll warrant that our friend here, Mr. Thomas—if he will pardon the personal application of my theory—is the head of a very comfortable and happy home..

Thomas. A very modest home, sir, which I trust you will honor with a visit during your stay in our city.

Kane. I shall be delighted. But now that we have settled the home question what are you going to do about the foundations of the republic, Allen?

Mead. O, I think I'll let you and Carnegie and Rockefeller attend to them. I'm busy.

Kane. That's the most sensible thing I've heard you say. Only you must let me out. I'm still after the money. Carnegie and Rockefeller have got theirs.

Thomas. You speak wisely, Mr. Kane. It is a deplorable tendency of our times that young men who have still their own way to make in the world should meddle with these questions of public policy.

Kane (winking at Mead). I rather prided myself that a substantial and practical citizen like you, Mr. Thomas, would take that view.

Thomas. Yes, there is too much intermeddling now. It was not so when I was a young man.

Kane. It is very sad. Now when I was your age, Allen, I had learned the entire business of getting franchises through the council and legislature.

Thomas. Ah, it requires much tact sometimes. That D street franchise—

Kane (*looking and acting all that he does not say*) Tact, yes. Tact is a good word for it. (*Counting on his fingers*): G—r—a— (*f and t he slurs over rapidly, then*): T—a—c—t. Why it's shorter, too. O, tact is the right word But say, Allen, you're not going to let the foundations go so easily, are you?

Mead (*wearily*). O, they're going fast enough. One can hear them groaning and crumbling beneath the superstructure we're piling on them.

Thomas. I trust you are wrong in that, Mr. Mead.

Grace answers call of Telephone.

Mead. I think we need new foundations, and not of the charity kind.

Grace (*at phone*). It's for you, Mr. Mead.

Mead (*rising*). Pardon me. (*Goes to telephone*) Yes, sometime this afternoon. Say, Joe—wait a minute. You remember Martin Kane? Yes, I'll have him talk to you. (*Kane has heard and comes forward*) Here, Martin, talk to Joe Allison (*handing receiver to Kane and starting back toward desk*).

Thomas (*has come toward center and is staring at Grace, who is diligently working, her back toward the room and its occupants. Thomas halts Mead to say*) A very intelligent young woman—

Mead (*shortly*). Yes.

Thomas. I don't recall seeing her here before.

Mead (*repressing his annoyance*). She has been here about a month.

Thomas. I remember you had an elderly woman (*with an insinuating glance which Mead pretends not to see*) Does she live at home with her people?

Mead (*drily*). I believe so. Pardon me (*Passes to his desk and becomes absorbed in his letters, leaving Thomas standing at the left lower end of the table, his gaze directed toward Grace who is thumping the typewriter vigorously*).

Kane (*seated at right of table talking in phone*). I don't know how long I'll stay—

The door opens softly and a light step is heard only by the two men as

Marian Wilson enters

Her quick glance takes in the visible occupants of the room and for the fraction of a second she hesitates—long enough to view her in perspective and fix a portrait which if taken at shorter range might be less ideal.

At this distance she is the pink and perfection of modern American femininity. In stature neither tall nor short, in grace of curve and carriage her form is naturally such as the straight-front corset was meant to produce. Her oval face is surrounded by masses of auburn hair: under a high forehead are eyes not too large, a finely chiseled nose high at base, and a mouth that loses no charm for its firmness, nor for a trace of a line at the corners—a distinctive, appealing, intelligent face. Her head she carries as tho there were a crown on it, and "crowns topple when heads wobble," saith the poet.

Of course, there is no crown on Marian Wilson's head, but only a hideous millinery affair, which is not in the extreme mode, however, but chosen with such taste—as is all her apparel—that its modernity is insufficiently shocking to mar the portrait of the fascinating woman now hesitating on the threshold, and staring for the barest instant, at the two men who more than return her stare.

Kane (*rising—aside*). The woman of Tony's!!

Thomas (*aside*). She here!

Marian (*flashing a look half appeal, half defiance, advancing*). Grace, dear—

Grace (*turns, surprised, rises*). Mother! I'm so glad you looked in.

Kane (*aside*). Her mother!

Thomas (*aside*). Her daughter!!

Marian (*to Grace*). I had just a moment to spare, in shopping. (*The two women are together near the typewriter as the curtain falls.*)

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

Scene: The same. Practically no time has elapsed. **Kane** has left the telephone and crossed to **Thomas** with whom he is exchanging a word, presumably about the visitor, while **Mead** has left his desk, crossed to **Grace** and her mother and with the latter is shaking hands as the curtain rises.

Mead. It was good of you to call, Mrs. Wilson. I had been hoping to meet you.

Marian (*has looked him over covertly, but searchingly*). It is nice of you to say so. I had an errand for Grace (*glancing at Kane and Thomas*) but I fear I interrupted you at a busy time.

Mead (*recalling their presence, introduces them*). This is Mr. Thomas—Mrs. Wilson. Mr. Thomas is one of our old residents.

Marian (*nods affably*). How do you do, Mr. Thomas.

Thomas (*awkwardly mumbles*). Madam——

Mead. And Mr. Kane, Mrs. Wilson—the wickedest man I know—from New York.

Marian (*offers him the tips of her fingers*). Mr. Kane—(*looks at him fearlessly*)

Kane. I am delighted, Mrs. Wilson. Of course, you don't believe anything a friend says about one.

Mead (*starts to place a chair, in which he is fore-stalled by Kane*). Won't you be seated, please.

Marian (*accepts the chair, smiling impartially to both*). Thank you. (*Mead turns to Thomas for an instant and then goes to Grace*). Business friends are not usually so candid, are they?

Kane. O, we are more than business friends. I had charge of his education for a number of years.

Marian. Indeed. He doesn't look so bad. Perhaps he was not an apt pupil in your school.

Marian is talking to **Grace** at the typewriter.

Thomas stands to right front covertly watching them.

Kane (*sated at the opposite side of the table; looks across at Marian; their eyes meet understandingly*). He has been from under my care for three years now. He's left my school and turned intellectual.

Marian. That is fortunate.

Kane. Most unfortunate, I should say. (*Glances toward couple*) He will need the money.

Marian. Sometimes I think money isn't the only thing in the world.

Kane. I have just been trying to convince him that money is first.

Marian. Did you succeed?

Kane. He is stubborn on that point.

Marian. I am glad of that.

Kane. So am I, but I wouldn't want him to know it.

Warian. Why seek to convince him of what you know to be false?

Kane. I don't know it to be false. It's true enough.

Marian (*looking anxiously at Thomas*), I have thought so.

Kane (*following her glance*). Mr. Thomas has money.

Marian (*with repugnance*). Nothing but money.

Kane. You know him?

Marian. Unfortunately.

Kane (*deliberately*). If you should need a friend, Mrs. Wilson (*indicating Thomas as the enemy*) I'd be glad if I could help you. (*Telephone rings; he answers it*) Mr. Mead is right here.

Mead (*comes to 'phone*). Yes, he's here. Hold the wire. It's for you, Mr. Thomas.

Thomas (*at 'phone*). Yes, I can come over now. I'll look in again before noon, Mr. Mead. We ought to conclude that matter of the option. (*Bows awkwardly and departs*)

Mead (*seeing him to the door*). By all means. I'll expect you.

Marian (*rising*). I feel that I am detaining you business men.

Mead. By no means. Don't go yet.

Kane (*rising*). Not at all. My only business at present is to keep Mr. Mead from dreaming too much.

Mead. Be seated, please, and let Mr. Kane tell you what awful creatures women are. I'll get into another argument with him if you go. He's a visitor, so I can't turn him out. If you'll only listen to him while I get off some letters—. He thinks he knows all about women.

Marian (*sitting*). How interesting. Am I too old to learn?

Kane (*sitting*). Alas! I am learning man's ingratitude now, Mrs. Wilson. He scorns the counsel that would save him.

Mead (*laughing as he goes to Grace*). His faith is too strong for me.

Marian. What is the chief article of your faith, Mr. Kane?

Kane. Money.

Marian. A very popular doctrine.

Kane. Yes; and without the disadvantage of heresy.

Marian. There is an occasional heretic, I hope.

Kane. Allen has the symptoms. But we who live the true faith are not bothered to torture the heretics.

Marian. Their heresy is their torture?

Kane. Presisely. Thumbscrew and rack they apply themselves and find hell quicker than the faithful could send them there.

Marian. Their hell is a deep one. I shrank from it. I have not been a heretic. But—and yet—

Kane. Pardon me, Mrs. Wilson, there are no buts and yets in the true gospel. Money precedes all.

Marian (*slowly*). I have thought so—and paid—

Kane. The world's price to you for money. I admire you more than I can express.

Marian. Sometimes I doubt.

Kane. Doubt will bring wrinkles. Don't do it.

Marian. You are thoroly wicked, as your friend says, aren't you?

Kane. I try to be.

Marian. You have the courage of your life.

Kane. Haven't you?

Marian. I have had.

Kane. You have no regrets?

Marian (*revealing a shade of the hardness that has crept into her naturally musical voice*). None whatever. I chose my life deliberately. It's need was money.

Kane. And you bought your money in the world's

market, giving a fairer equivalent for it than I give for mine.

Marian. I am surprised to hear such views from a man.

Kane. You'd be more surprised to hear them from a woman, wouldn't you?

Marian. I have heard them from women—not often.

Kane (*a bit disconserted*). H'm—is that so? But, pardon me, Mrs. Wilson, you made one mistake.

Marian. Even that is possible.

Kane. You should have sold yourself as an exclusive privilege to one rich man—or to a syndicate of two or three.

Marian. That is the more usual way, and has certain advantages which I underestimated when younger.

Kane. It has all the advantages that hypocrisy affords.

Marian. But the idea was more repellent to me than the one I chose.

Kane. You seem to have been obsessed by an abnormal aversion to chattel ownership, Mrs. Wilson—yet you married?

Marian. That was a touch of romance to which I succumbed—an inherited emotional taint, probably.

Kane. And you thought marriage essential to romance?

Marian. No; to motherhood.

Kane. Do you still think so?

Marian. Marriage is essential to nothing—but my business.

Kane. No; you leave out a number of other callings. There's the divorce court and its attaches, detectives who secure the evidence, stenographers who transcribe it, lawyers, prison keepers who guard bigamists—. You see, there's quite a large class of worthy people interested in marriage.

Marian. You can see far.

Kane. I can see that you are hopeless, Mrs. Wilson. You never will be rich.

Marian. I never craved that. I earn enough.

Kane. And you earn it honestly.

Marian. I earn it as I can—as the world dictates.

Kane. And you can't re-make the world, as Allen fancies he can?

Marian. Does he?

Kane. Yes—he is thirty.

Marian. I knew better at twenty.

Kane. Allen never will know better. It's constitutional, like a tendency to dyspepsia.

Marian. But we're apt to change as we grow older?

. . . . I used to think we had to live.

Kane. You can't change that?

Marian. It's the only thing we can change.

Kane. You don't mean—?

Marian.—that life may not be necessary—or preferable, at the price—yes. When I was young I thought life was first.

Kane. And now—?

Marian. I see the error of that view.

Kane. It's a very common error.

Marian. So common I wish I could have been spared it.

Kane. You are an uncommon woman.

Marian. No, your compliment is not justified. Life seemed important to me—and to live without money was as impossible as to work for less than the price of my shoes and gloves. I suppose it was youth that blinded me to the only regal and uncommon choice. I have not the same blindness now.

Kane. You are not serious, Mrs. Wilson?

Marian. Quite. I lack what you call a sense of humor, I suppose.

Kane. But your daughter?

Marian (*with a shade of anxiety*). If I could see her safe first . . . and then securely hide it. (*She looks silently at the couple, who are more engrossed in each other than in their pretended work.*)

Kane *rises abstractedly, seemingly intent upon some object at the other side of the room.*

Marian (*turning, sees his back, thinks he is bored, is chagrined at his impoliteness, but with an effort says lightly*): Have you been to the new roof garden?

Kane (*turns quickly*). Pardon me. I was thinking.

Marian. O, it is much too warm to think.

Kane (*resuming his seat and speaking hurriedly and positively*). I am a man of some means, Mrs. Wilson. I admire you immensely. I would like to help you resolve that doubt between life and death. (*Then lightly*) It will affect the liver and spoil your complexion.

Marian. I can buy a new one.

Kane. Not like that. Or—well, let it go that you can. I needn't tell you what money can't buy.

Marian. It buys much.

Kane. Everything . . . Well—I wish you would buy your new complexion—when you need it . . . with my money. Is that clear?

Marian (*with some dignity, but calmly*). The words are clear, but the meaning I don't quite catch. What is the price of you money, Mr. Kane?

Kane. Your regard—

Marian. I don't understand you.

Kane. Of course—you think I'm talking business. I am not.

Marian. You are talking of money—

Kane. But in a new sense—new to me, at any rate, and probably to you. Listen, please. I have more money than enough—and get it easily—

Marian. But your financial standing, Mr. Kane, is not—

Kane. Will you hear me out?—just a moment. I have nothing to do with my money but spend it as I please. I want to spend some now—to please myself. Will you accept it?

MARIAN (formally). What is the amount?

Kane. All that you may require to resolve that doubt. There is no limit.

Marian (icily). The exclusive privilege, I presume?

Kane (emphatically). No! I'm not asking you to buy my money.

Marian (rising). What do you ask for it?

Kane (rising). Nothing.

Marian (regarding him dubiously). Nothing?

Kane. Not even your regard. I'd win that in a de-center way—if I can.

Marian (there is a suspicion of moisture in her eyes. Impulsively she puts out her hands—hurriedly withdraws and turns away. There is a slight pause. When she faces him again there is coldness in her glance and voice.). I don't understand you, Mr. Kane. Money is for barter and sale. I don't understand you.

Thomas re-enters

Kane (turning away). I don't understand myself.

Mead (going to Thomas). I know Mrs. Wilson has an errand with her daughter. She'll excuse us, I'm sure.

Marian. Please don't consider me at all, or I shall know I'm intruding and run away.

Mead. Don't go. Stay and visit with Grace. She's not busy.

Marian (going to Grace). Thank you.

Mead (as he and Thomas and Kane retreat behind the screen) I expect to close the deal at once, Mr. Thomas. My party is from out of town and wants to get away.

Thomas (looking at his watch). I desire to go slowly and fairly in this matter, Mr. Mead.

Mead. There isn't any question of your fairness, Mr. Thomas. Of course you'll be fair.

Thomas. Fair to all concerned alike—that's my maxim.

Kane. Business maxims are handy. I always keep a stock for emergencies.

Thomas. Ahem! The franchise committee of the council has the D street road in hand now. They ought to be through in a few minutes. They will call me up here. We had better wait.

Mead. Of course we can wait, but I don't see how the council's action can affect my client—or your word.

Kane. This is not your clairvoyant day, I notice, Allen.

Mead. Your three hundred per cent increase is pretty good, isn't it?

Kane. O, yes, this is a good enough republic for Mr. Thomas and me. We neither toil nor spin—

Thomas (*glad to change the subject*). Indeed, my friends—I feel that I can call you both by that appellation—(*Kane bows*) Is not ours the freest and grandest nation on earth? We have no titles here, or privileged classes. We judge men by worth.

Kane. Yes, by what they're worth. Think of that.

Mead. When I do I feel I'd as leave be an Englishman and tip my hat to a title as to money. It seems more human.

Thomas. You would not advocate a titled aristocracy in this country? (*Reflectively*) Tho it might have advantages.

Mead. No; nor the continued rule of the untitled plutocracy. Money is the most cruel master that men ever had.

Kane. There's no master without slaves

Mead. True; our veneration and fear of money is its real power.

Kane. What is money, Allen—so long as we're prying into the mysteries.

Mead. Who knows?

Kane. Wall street.

Mead. Wall street least of all. Money is nothing—a phantom, a symbol. If all of it were cast in the sea tomorrow there'd be no less food and clothing in the world. Even when it's gold money has no real human worth.

Kane. O, I don't know—What! Gold?

Mead. Is all of it that was ever mined worth a single human life?

Kane. Whose life?

Mead. Ah, that's a point I had overlooked. Well, we'll say the other fellow's life.

Kane. You're not talking to Mr. Thomas and me. The *other* fellow's life would be rather well compensated to *us*, with quite a moderate amount of real gold.

Mead. But to him—would gold pay him for his life?

Kane. That question, you will readily perceive, my dear sir, should be addressed to *him*, and not to such entirely disinterested parties as Mr. Thomas and me.

Mead. Very well; then, as to your own lives. How much gold would pay for them?

Kane. That question, sir, I shall be compelled to characterize as impertinent, and move to have it stricken out as irrelevant to any contingency likely to arise in the affairs of such practical and eminently

respectable persons as ourselves. I believe you concur with me, Mr. Thomas?

Thomas (who suspects a strain of humor in this, but can't locate it.) Entirely, sir. Of course, we must take a broad view of these things.

Mead (rather disgusted). O, yes; any but the human view. In this country any consideration has the right of way over life—if there's money in it.

Thomas. I regret to hear you speak so, Mr. Mead. Such ill-advised utterances stir up much unrest in this country.

Kane. You are correct, sir. That's what I tell the agitators in New York. What if one does hypnotize a million or two, so long as only those on the inside know about it? Let's forget it and reach for another. But, no, your muck raker comes along and tells the whole nation—and there's a ten-day's noise about it till an earthquake or a divorce scandal overshadows it. Everything would go along smoothly, Allen, if if weren't for you agitators.

Mead. But there'll have to be a reckoning some day between the robbers and the people.

Kane (aside to Mead). It'll come quicker the harder they're pinched.

Mead. You in New York seem to think money is coined out of ether, or falls like manna from the sky.

Kane. It's manna to a number of us, sure—and we're not asking questions or agitating to put the losers next.

Mead. Some day it will dawn on the people that your stock-jobbing dollars are coined out of human blood.

Kane. And then a war with China till they go to sleep again. But say, Allen, that's good. Why don't you make a speech of it and run for the legislature. You'd soon reach congress with that line of goods—"coined out of blood"—Fine, isn't it, Mr. Thomas?

Thomas. Very good rhetoric, indeed. Such speeches are in great vogue now. I think I could promise him the assembly nomination in the tenth district. On the political rostrum such sentiments are quite in place.

Kane. There's your chance, Allen. I'll stand for the expense.

Mead. No, thank you. I believe I'll wait awhile and run for president. Every boy born in this country can be president, you know.

Thomas. Any boy, Mr. Mead; not every boy. There's quite a difference.

Kane. O, a letter or two in a word doesn't matter in politics, Mr. Thomas. This is the land of the free and the easy.

Thomas. It's a grand nation, sir.

Kane. The very sublimest in the cosmos. Think of me going to New York with only \$16,000 three years ago and getting in on the subway steals (*hurriedly*) I mean deals—I said sdeals—

Mead. Yes, we heard you say deals.

Kane. You understood me accurately, Mr. Thomas? I spoke of the subway s—deals?

Thomas. I so understood you, Mr. Kane.

Mead. You tried to say deals, Martin. Go head.

Kane (serverely). I like to be very explicit in these matters. Continuing then: I had acquaintances who opened the window—

Mead. What was the matter with the door?

Kane. Tamany keeps it locked. Don't interrupt me with foolish questions, Allen. As I was saying, I got in on the ground floor of these subway s-deals and turned \$80,000 in less than three months—just as easy. O, it's a great republic.

Thomas. Eighty thousand—that's a very good sum. Ah, you see, there is much to reward thrift and industry in this country.

Kane. Yes; I worked hard, interviewing personally and persuasively I may say every official who could be reached. Industry and thrift, these are my constant watchwords. Why sir, do you know that when I am home, I arise every morning before breakfast.

(*Telephone rings*)

Thomas (rising). Success is always achieved by exemplary habits and strict attention to business. Our young people are too thoughtless.

Mead (rising, suppressing laughter). Martin, you're more than the limit.

Grace (at 'phone). It's for Mr. Thomas.

Thomas goes to phone.

Kane. It's shocking, the thoughtlessness of our young people—especially of our young politicians.

Mead searches his desk for something he doesn't find.

Marian and Grace are together at the typewriter.

Thomas (whispering in 'phone). Gallagher voted with us, did he. The mayor will sign. That's all right. Well, it cost us enough. Goodby. (*Hangs up receiver and turns to Mead*) You say you have a letter of mine authorizing you to sell?

Mead (meeting Thomas half way). Certainly—you remember. We talked about it.

Thomas (cautiously). I am not sure. I'd like to see the letter.

Mead. It's probably downstairs in my safety deposit box. I'll go after it. (*They walk toward door*) It won't take but a few minutes. (*Goes*)

Thomas turns and walks thoughtfully to table, where he halts and looks toward the women.

Grace shrugs her shoulders and pretends to resume her work, unwilling to converse in his presence.

Marian rises and advances a step toward him, questioningly and defiantly.

Thomas takes out his pocket book, extracts a number of bills and with an unmistakable look from mother to daughter, lays them on the table.

Marian noiselessly, impulsively, with fear and horror on her face, sweeps the money on the floor.

Kane sauntering to the edge of the screen intending to pass out into the room, sees this, hesitates.

Thomas (stoops to gather up the bills, rises red in the face and blustering). I am used to getting what I want.

Marian (imploringly, apprehensive lest Grace's attention be attracted). Not here—not now—!

Thomas (sees his advantage, raises his voice). The price—O! O! Confound you! Damn!

These explosives are caused by the impact of **Kane's** heel on the **Thomas** corn, and were preceded by the noise of **Kane** stumbling over a chair. The latter's entanglement precipitated him awkwardly, but opportunely. Regaining his balance, he profusely apologizes.

Kane. A thousand pardons, Mr. Thomas. I heard you speak of the price—of lots, wasn't it? and I was interested. But I didn't mean to fall all over myself like this. I'm too impetuous in my business instincts. Can you pardon me?

Thomas (seated to left of table, nursing his foot). O! ah! You are clumsy, sir! O! O!

Kane (sympathetically). Yes, I am—very clumsy. It's my business instincts. You spoke so loud about the price of something (*a glance at Marian, who returns it warmly*) and I hastened to get in on the ground floor. My business impetuosity will hurt someone yet, if I'm not careful. Is it very painful?

Thomas. Whew! Whew! O—

Mead re-enters

Mead (paper in hand). I wasn't gone long?

Marian (meets him near door). I have enjoyed my visit so much, Mr. Mead, tho I'm sure I intruded too long. You will pardon me, won't you?

Mead. If you'll promise to do it again—whenever you're down this way?

Marian. It is kind of you. I hope we will see you at our home soon. You will always be welcome.

Mead. Thank you. I'll avail myself of the privilege, you may be sure. Good Morning. (*Passes down to Thomas and hands him paper*)

Kane (intercepting her at door). And I shall call—?

Marian. My friends never call at my home.

Kane (holding door open for her). Then I'm not your friend, but Allen's. On that basis—?

Marian (*passing out*). No—you had better not.

Kane. But I shall. (*Closes door and comes down and seats himself at table opposite Thomas, who is studying the paper.*)

Mead (*standing beside Thomas*). You see—the price is named. You authorize me to sell for \$56,000. It is scarcely a month old.

Thomas (*dubiously*). H'm'm—

Mead (*confidently*). Of course, you're bound to be fair, as you say, and there's a good unearned increment in it for you.

Kane (*nonchalantly*). It's easy money in real estate, if you know which way the car line is coming.

Thomas (*looks up guiltily*). Well—ahem—

Mead. O, it's safe to buy land anywhere in a growing city, and hold it till the pressure of population gives it more value.

Thomas. That's business.

Kane. And you wouldn't interfere with the sacred institution of business?

Mead. I'd replace it with decency and sympathy—if I could.

Kane holds up his hands in mock horror.

Thomas offers a gesture of impatience.

Mead. But don't be alarmed gentlemen. I can't.

Kane. Indeed you can't. I think we can safely pass that point, Mr. Thomas. He can't.

Mead. And the next best thing would be to get the people to understand the degradation involved in the whole scheme of buying and selling land.

Thomas. Degradation !!

Mead. It's on par with buying and selling men.

Thomas. I never heard such sentiments.

Mead. Land and men are inseparable. The slavery involved in owning land isn't as personally apparent as in owning men, but it's even more effective. Trading in land must go as trading in men went. Morally there is no difference and actually the slaves were better fed and housed than the landless are now.

Kane. I have no land, Allen.

Mead. But your stocks and currency can be converted into land and are mortagages on human labor applied to the land. Like the unearned increment and all values, the presence of the people makes it, their labor pays it, and you reap it.

Thomas. You say the people create values?

Mead. Certainly. If the landless people moved out of this town tomorrow your land wouldn't be worth a cent a front foot. There's no value without people and there's no wealth that doesn't come from the land.

Kane. I got a million dollars last week for writing a beautiful poem.

Mead. Ten dollars, you mean. But the dollars came from the land, and the poem, too—the paper it was written on, the pen or pencil, the soil under your feet while you wrote—

Kane (*perversely*). But—I wrote this poem on ship-board.

Mead. I don't care if you wrote it in an airship—except that I'm pained at your mendacity. The ship came from the land. There's just one thing that man can neither live nor die without, and that's land.

Kane (*rising*). The moral of which is—

Mead. There's nothing moral about it. It's the beginning and end of all immorality.

Kane. Allen, the class in political economy will now adjourn, and I'll pronounce the moral. We must have a moral. How could Mr. Thomas and I do business without morals? And the moral is, Don't be landless. Be a landlord and let the other fellow sweat. Is n't that right, Mr. Thomas?

Mead. Martin, you're—civilized!

Kane. Almost, Allen.

Thomas. Yes, every man should own a piece of land.

Mead. That would be hard on some people. There'd be no landlords then.

Thomas. I mean it should be the effort of every man to own a piece of land, his life's ambition, so to speak.

Mead. Which in the case of ninety per cent. must be doomed to failure.

Thomas. Of course there will always be a large class of unthrifty people.

Mead. To live on our land and pay us toll for the privilege of living at all.

Thomas (*tartly*). I don't care to listen to these extreme views. Every man can own land in this country if he will save.

Mead (*mildly*). Any man, Mr. Thomas—not every man. It's as impossible now for ninety per cent of the people to own land as it is for all but one of the ninety millions to be president.

Kane. Well, there's the sea. Get a house boat if you're landless. Anyway, I've called off this economic discussion. It's getting on Mr. Thomas' nerves, and I fancy he will need his entire nerve capacity to adjust this option matter.

Mead. O, I think we'll settle that quickly, now that Mr. Thomas has read his own letter authorizing me to sell. (*Taking letter from Thomas' hand*) Excuse me. (*Reading*) It's all clear enough here. Mr. Thomas is bound to do what is right.

Thomas (*dubiously*). I must be fair to myself first before I can be fair to anyone else. My interests are at stake.

Mead (*surprised*). But the letter is plain. Of course no one can force you to sell your property, but you can't go back on your letter?

Thomas. I can't remember having written any such letter.

Mead (*more surprised*). But here it is. You've seen it. That is your signature, isn't it?

Thomas. I wouldn't care to commit myself to that now, Mr. Mead.

Mead. What! Not admit your own handwriting?

Thomas (*decisively*). The fact is, I can't think of selling the property for that price now. It is worth more. I must consider my interests.

Mead. You don't mean to say you would deny a written agreement like this?

Thomas (*in mollifying tone*). But a man must be fair to his own interests, Mr. Mead. We must deal honorably to all concerned alike. I am a man of family and cannot regard my inclinations in a matter like this.

Mead. And a written agreement counts for nothing?

Thomas *only shrugs his shoulders*.

Kane. What is there so sacred about a written agreement, Allen? It seems to be fetish to you.

Mead (*perplexed, losing his sense of humor in a situation unpleasantly personal*). Why the terms of a written agreement are irrevocably fixed. They're not to be forgotten, altered, or broken.

Kane. O, aren't they? I wonder what you think the law is for?

Mead. Why for just such cases as this—to hold men to their agreements.

Kane. I'm losing faith in your sanity, Allen. How much are you worth?

Mead (*excitedly*). What has that to do with it? Here is the proof in his own handwriting.

Kane. It's the whole question. How much money have you to back your proof?

Thomas. I trust Mr. Mead is not seriously thinking of carrying this trifling matter to court.

Mead. That's exactly my position. It's not a trifling matter to me. I've spent a month and made several expensive trips to effect this sale. My word is at stake. I shall hold you to this agreement.

Thomas (*deliberately*). Mr. Mead, this has now become a business principle. I am always prepared to defend my principles, no matter what the cost. I hope I make my position clear to you.

Kane (*with considerable disgust for Thomas in his tone*). Why it's as clear as mud. Better drop it, Allen, Let's go and have a drink.

Mead (*defiant*). Thomas has got to deal squarely in this. It's a big matter to me. I have the proof.

Kane. What! You're going to stand out against a principle! Was even life ever worth a puff of smoke against a principle? You know better. And this is a business principle. You'll last about thirty seconds against a business principle. Come, it's time to have a drink.

Mead. No! This thing must be settled. My word's at stake, without counting the money end of it. I shall sue on this agreement.

Thomas. Don't do anything so ill-advised. You understand, don't you, that I should not permit myself to be beaten in the courts?

Mead. I understand that you shall be made to deal honestly, if there is any virtue in the law.

Kane. Legal virtue is a matter of attorney's fees, Allen—when not something more equivocal. I thought you knew that.

Thomas (*the bully coming to the surface*). You fool pauper, do you threaten me with the law! Suppose I show in court that you forged that letter to blackmail me into selling to your clique. What chance would you stand in court against me?

Kane. That's business. Do you think our courts are ornaments, Allen?

Mead (*in disgust*). Hell, Martin! They're not as rotten as that?

Kane. They're as rotten as men—and men are what money makes of them.

Mead (*in utter contempt, crumples the letter and throws it in Thomas' face*). Ugh! Your money sickens me! (*Goes to his desk.*)

Thomas picks up letter and goes out.

Grace crosses to Mead.

Kane (*sits with one leg over the table*). You'll have to recover from that sickness, my boy.

The curtain falls on

END OF ACT TWO

A C T T H R E E

Time: A month later; early evening.

Scene: A quiet corner in the ladies' parlor of Hotel Eureka, shut off by heavy curtains at back. A lounge right, a number of comfortable chairs, and a small table on which are flowers. As the curtain rises

Thomas enters

looking at his watch, paces floor. At center he halts; the curtains part, and

Marian enters
bows formally and comes right.

Thomas (*amicably*). I think you did well to come, Mrs. Wilson. It will result in a better understanding between us—and may save you some annoyance.

Marian (*fencing*). Yes, I trust there will be a better understanding. . . . I received your message—

Thomas. Let's sit down (*sinks into easy chair to right of center facing lounge*).

Marian (*sitting hesitantly on edge of lounge*). Your message didn't indicate any special reason for this meeting—?

Thomas (*bluntly*). I met you before.

Marian (*evasively*). At Mr. Mead's office.

Thomas. No, before that—at Tony's.

Marian (*resignedly*). Yes—a year ago.

Thomas. I'm glad you remember. It will save time and words.

Marian. I can't forget. Lethean waters I do not find in my cup of life.

Thomas. Things like that don't appeal to me.

Marian. Pardon me.

Thomas. We won't waste time on things that don't touch the point at issue.

Marian. May I ask you then to state the point?

Thomas. I guess you know.

Marian. I am waiting to hear.

Thomas (*studying the carpet*). I've taken quite a fancy to your daughter. (*Marian shudders*) I'm not going to make talk about it. I'm willing to be fair and pay her and you liberally—

Marian (*very quietly*). I would rather see her dead.

Thomas. O—that don't bother me. Women always talk about dying when they can't have their way. You might as well take a sensible view of it. I'll treat her well.

Marian (*quietly*). Your partial knowledge of my life seems to give you the right to talk this way. But you don't know me—nor the reason of my life.

Thomas. Of course, women like you are out for the money.

Marian (*still with repression*). I shall not attempt to dispute that point with you.

Thomas (*sincerely*). You can't. It's true.

Marian (*earnestly, but quietly*). Perhaps it is true—or was. But money didn't lure me till I found that its lack would dwarf the life I cared most to cherish. The fear of poverty came to me in the prattle of a child. I saw its life denied decencies and adyantages that only money could supply . . . And I went out and demanded money of the world—and found what its price was—and paid it.

(**Thomas** shrugs his shoulders impatiently.)
My child had the same right as yours to be well housed

and clothed. My child should have schools and music and good food and pleasant surroundings—and these cost money . . . I had but one way to get money.

Thomas. You weren't satisfied to live within your means. It's this extravagance that does all the harm.

Marian. Your wife does her shopping in her private car. I walk.

Thomas (*argumentatively*). But she has the means.

Marian. She sold herself to you for them. She was as poor a girl as I. We grew up in the same neighborhood and went to the same schools.

Thomas (*definitely and finally*). I married her.

Marian (*wearily*). I have not envied her.

Thomas (*whose time is valuable*). Well, well—

Marian. My life has had a purpose. It has been full of sham, but to be a woman is to live a hypocrite. I have sold myself to men and kept my place among women with the money their husbands paid me. (*Bitterly*) Yes, I was out for the money—(*fiercely*) so that my daughter should not know the world's price to woman for bread and clothes!

Thomas. Then your daughter don't know about—your life?

Marian. My life has been to save her from the knowledge that such a life need be.

Thomas. Things like that run in families. You can't expect anything different. She'll need money herself.

Marian. Her danger is past, I feel, and my death will save her from the knowledge of my life.

Thomas. I suppose you're counting on young Mead? (*She is silent*) But he won't be in shape to meet your plans. (*Waits for her to speak: she is silent*) I expect the grand jury will have to indict him.

Marian. Impossible! What for?

Thomas. Well, he's been tampering with my papers.

Marian (*unable to repress her alarm*). It can't be—You wouldn't dare—

Thomas. I know what I'm talking about.

Marian. It's monstrous—impossible! You can't reach him. You wouldn't persecute him?

Thomas. He brought it on himself—threatened me with law. I wouldn't count on him. He won't be here.

Marian (*alarmed*). O, this is a nightmare that I shall shake off! The world can't be all black!

Thomas. The world's just what it is, of course.

Marian (*searchingly*). But you are not all money? There is blood in your veins? You have a daughter—

Thomas. We won't bring her in this matter.

Marian (*anxiously*). O, yes we shall! I will go on my knees to her and beg her to soften you!

Thomas (*stolidly*). My daughter ain't accessible to your kind.

Marian (*for the only time during the play losing control of herself, pleading swiftly and passionately under stress of terror*). O, God! My kind have hearts and souls! We are women—human beings! We writhe under torture as other women! We smile, we please you, we feel pain, and love our young! O, have you never known pain? Have you never felt the iron hand of life at your throat dragging you down and demanding the blood of your heart? Have you never shrunk in terror from fate? You must have suffered! The world can't be all money to you! You won't pit your wealth against the life I care more for than heaven or hell?

Thomas has partly turned his back, studies the carpet and shrugs his shoulders.

Marian (*kneels*). See! See! I am humble! Who am I to stand upright before you? I kneel! I kneel! Is not that enough? A mother, on her knees to you—pleading for a daughter's life!

Thomas (*rising*). Pshaw! I didn't think we'd have a scene. I thought you were too sensible for that.

Marian (*turning away, is on her knees at the lounge an instant, her face in her hands. She is thoroly alarmed. Quickly she suppresses her excitement and reverts impulsively to her more effective weapon. As she rises to face Thomas she still gasps and her hands twitch, but she smiles and speaks softly*). I am so nervous. All women are nervous, aren't they? This is quite a lengthy business conversation for me. I hope you will pardon my nerves.

Thomas. O, it's always that way with women, I suppose. I hope your daughter hasn't got nerves yet.

Marian (*shudders*). No; Grace is very even tempered.

Thomas. I rather thought so. That's why I like her. I'm tired of these scenes with women.

Marian. And since you have taken such an interest in her—and are—are so determined—

Thomas. I'll treat her right, and be liberal to both of you. You won't find me hard. It's all a matter of business with me.

Marian. Yes, indeed; all life is a matter of business, isn't it?

Thomas. Why of course (*as tho he said, "Certainly water is wet."* Life has not presented itself to him in any other phase.)

Marian (*hesitantly*). You probably have plans—?

Thomas. Well, there's a comfortably furnished flat in the north end that's vacant now. She could live there—and you could visit—

Marian. She will have to leave home, then? Her father will question. It will be difficult.

Thomas. O, I guess you can fix that. Girl going to the country—or something.

Marian (*her face shows pain, but her voice is firm and she smiles*). Yes; everything can be arranged . . . I suppose you won't press the case against Mr. Mead?

Thomas. What's your interest in him? He ain't going to be anything to the girl.

Marian. O, no; but we're all friends, and I thought you might—

Thomas (*magnanimously*). I'll tell you what I'll do. I won't stop the indictment, but if things go all right, and the girl is satisfied, and he keeps away from her, I'll have the thing drag along. I'll use my influence—maybe there'll be no trial.

Marian. I suppose that is all his friends can expect.

Thomas (*snappishly*). It's all they'll get.

Marian. We will be grateful for whatever forbearance . . . I presume we understand the situation, then?

Thomas. I guess that's about all. Don't attempt to play me. You can't. I can put the police on you in a minute. I'm not afraid to spend a few dollars to have things go as I want them. I needn't tell you.

Marian. You are a powerful man in this city. I shall not attempt to oppose you.

Thomas. You seem to be taking a sensible view. I hope you mean it. I'm pretty busy—and don't want to wrangle anyway.

Marian. The interview is concluded, then—?

Thomas. Why, I suppose that's about all. You probably want some money?

Marian (*scarcely able to stand*). It's always the most available thing.

Thomas. When you're buying it is. (*Hands bills*) I won't count the pennies. There's more when you want it. (*Mechanically she takes the money*) I'll have the key sent to you, or you can call at Ford's for it.

Marian. I will call.

Thomas. Maybe that's better. I'll expect her over there tomorrow evening, say?

Marian. That is soon—The day after—?

Thomas (*looks at her sharply*). Well, the day after. But no later.

Marian. No later.

Thomas. Well, I'll go. (*He leaves abruptly*)

Marian sinks exhaustedly on the lounge. Presently she rises and tears the money into fragments which she scatters on the floor. This she does not in rage or hate, but with uncanny deliberation, her face contorted with pain, repugnance, and terror. When the bills are destroyed she sinks on the lounge again, but presently recovers poise and goes out silently.

The stage is deserted for a moment till

Kane, Mead, Grace, and John Wilson enter

Wilson is of medium size and medium in every other

way. He is 45 or less, his face, voice, garb, thought, and life—average. He is one of the many drawn thru the world's knot-hole and come out about alike. Civilization has tamed him physically, mentally and morally.

Kane. Now we can talk to our heart's content.

Grace (*to Mead*). I told father we'd find you here.

Wilson. Yes, she did. I thought you'd be home, but Grace said we'd find you with Mr. Kane.

Mead. That's odd. I meant to stay home this evening, but Martin 'phoned for me to come down and let him beat me at billiards. He wanted an easy mark. Everybody else at the hotel here beats him. I've lost three games. I'm glad you came and saved me from the fourth.

Kane. So am I. He's stupider with the cue than the bell boys and less truthful. They'll tell you I've beaten everybody who plays here.

Mead. They'll tell you anything. They like his tips. What is it, an ice cream party at Shirley's?

Wilson (*to Mead*). I wanted to speak with you.

Mead (*to Grace*). Will you let Martin bore you a few minutes, please? (*Comes front with Wilson*)

Wilson. This is serious. I thought I'd tell you first.

Mead. Serious, is it?

Wilson. They have me on the grand jury.

Mead. H'm—that is serious. But we all have to serve when the sheriff's lightning strikes.

Wilson. But this is about you. They'll indict you.

Mead. Me! Indict me!!

Wilson. We're sworn not to tell—but in a case like this . . . things don't look right, anyway.

Mead (*lowering his voice*). Go on—there must be some mistake. What charge?

Wilson (*whispering*). It's forgery.

Mead. Impossible! Absurd! (*Laughs*) What have I forged?

Wilson. Well, they had writing experts. Some real estate letter. I didn't catch the names.

Mead (*a light breaking*). Was it about an option?

Wilson. That's it. They had four experts, and a lot of your handwriting.

Mead (*repressing himself*). The d ——

Wilson. The district attorney seemed to think it was a sure case. Of course you never did anything like that.

Mead. It's perjured testimony, every word of it.

Wilson. I knew it, but I wanted to hear you say so.

Mead. Why, I can't believe it! . . . Well, I'll show up some rottenness in this town. Don't worry about me, Mr. Wilson.

Wilson. I suppose it will get in the papers.

Mead. When it does I'll have something to say. It

was good of you to come and tell me. Maybe you'd better not alarm them at home.

Wilson. Yes; I guess I'd better say nothing more. I just thought I'd warn you.

Mead. I'm grateful for that. This puts me on my fighting mettle. (*Going to Grace*) Shall we go for ice cream, now?

Grace. No. We must get right back. Mother will be home and miss us.

Wilson (to Mead). I suppose we'd better not be seen together.

Mead. Well, we'll postpone the ice cream. (*Aside to Grace*) Am I to call tomorrow evening?

Grace. I'll tell you in the morning.

Mead (as he and Kane hold the curtains for them to pass out). We'll see you to the car, anyway.

They all pass out and the stage is deserted till a Porter with dustpan and brush passes thru. He sees the litter of the bills and stops to brush it up. Noticing its texture he begins to examine it and presently is engaged in piecing it together.

Porter. Gee! that's real money. (*Looks around suspiciously, and finds the Head Porter standing over him*)

Head Porter. Give it here.

Porter. I found it. (*But he hands it over, reluctantly*)

Head Porter. Here's a dollar — (*handing coin*). You got a pretty good job here?

Porter. I ain't kicking.

Head Porter. It'll last longer if you keep still. (*Puts his fingers to his lips and goes*)

Porter looks at coin grimly, sighs, and exits.

Mead and Kane enter

Mead. Well?

Kane. I don't like it.

Mead. I won't leave him a leg to stand on.

Kane. Won't you? . . . How?

Mead. O, as to details—

Kane. It's time to think of them.

Mead. His testimony is perjured.

Kane. What has that to do with it?

Mead. Everything.

Kane. Nothing.

Mead. I'll show him to be a suborner of perjured testimony to carry out a private grudge.

Kane. It's more than that. Thomas doesn't spend money for spite. But how will you prove perjury?

Mead. How?

Kane. Yes, how?

Mead. Why, by showing the truth.

Kane. How?

Mead. O, don't be so serious, Martin. I'm not guilty. am I?

Kane. You talk like a lawyer trying to get a client. Your innocence is not the question. You might as well be guilty.

Mead. What! my innocence——?

Kane. Now be calm a minute. Four experts have testified—

Mead. To a lie!

Kane. You know it's a lie, and I know it, but how about the jury?

Mead. I'll get experts to tell the truth, and lawyers to trap his perjured experts.

Kane. He's already retained the best experts in this part of the country—and the highest priced lawyers. You might send to New York—

Mead. I will, if necessary.

Kane. How much could you clean up at a forced sale?

Mead. What's the difference? You know, —

Kane. Say about six thousand?

Mead. About.

Kane. How far would that go among lawyers and experts against those of a millionaire?

Mead. Far enough to clear me and show up Thomas in this town.

Kane. And leave you broke at the end of a two or three year's struggle.

Mead. Even so—but that's an extreme view.

Kane. It's the best outcome you could hope for; it's a dream that you can't realize.

Mead. Come now, Martin; you're moody tonight. Nothing looks good to you.

Kane. I see your finish in this town, Allen. Why not take Grace and go off somewhere? The world is big.

Mead. You don't know me, Martin, or you wouldn't talk like that. I hope you don't mean it.

Kane. I do mean it. There's more in this than—

Mead (*waits for him to finish*)—than what? What do you mean?

Kane. O, your case is enough. I see you with a few thousand dollars trying to battle with a millionaire. I don't count Thomas himself. He's a bone-head that you could outwit easily, in a game of skill.

Mead. Well, here's the game.

Kane. No; it isn't a game. It's the shell and pea swindle raised to the nth power. It's a fool man with pick and shovel trying to level Pike's Peak. It's money, Allen: pennies against thousands! Nothing, nothing counts in a case like this—or in the whole world—but money.

Mead. O, I think you exaggerate the importance of money.

Kane. I couldn't. It can't be exaggerated.

Mead. Decency and honesty count for something.

Kane. In the school books, yes. In private life, sometimes. When they come in contact with money pooh! they don't exist. Allen, you're down and out in this town. That indictment kills you. You're an old fashioned business man whose best asset is his reputation.

Mead. There are others.

Kane. Very few. If you hadn't run against this snag you might have accumulated fifty thousand or so by the time you were sixty—if your health kept good and the panics didn't catch you.

Mead. Well, fifty thousand would do. Life doesn't present itself to me entirely in terms of money.

Kane (*slowly*). Perhaps that's true of you. It hasn't been of me.

Mead. But it once was, Martin. That's what brought us together as boys. After your sister died and you went to Pittsburg—

Kane. Do you know why she died?

Mead. You never told me.

Kane. Because I didn't have money enough to save her.

Mead. But your relatives had money—?

Kane. They were afraid—

Mead. Afraid! Of what?

Kane. Afraid of poverty. I hadn't learned the game.

Mead (*after a pause*). I often wondered—I suppose there was a woman in those Pittsburg years—

Kane. One who needed the money . . . I got it for her . . . and got away from her.

Mead (*goes to Kane*). Forget it, old fellow. I didn't mean to probe. I just wanted to be sure you were still human.

Kane. We're all human, I suppose—except Thomas, and he's a condition. His mind is fogged with the money lust. He was born that way. He's our Frankenstein—the warning that men won't heed.

Mead. I think the money madness is wearing out itself. It's Frankensteins are destroying the whole system of private greed. In its place will come a passion for the common welfare, born of the knowledge that none can suffer or enjoy alone.

Kane. That sounds good, Allen—but the soul of this civilization is in the market place. Thomas isn't unique. He's only a symptom of our disease.

Mead (*half convinced*). Well—I'm hopeful.

Kane (*lightly*). Cheer up—you can't help that.

Mead (*smiling*). But tell me—if I'm in the old school of business, what is the new?

Kane. Look at me. Do you think an indictment would hurt my business standing? Not one or a dozen—so long as I play safe and keep my assessments to

the bar paid. Privately my friends trust me; in business I have no friends. The old school gives value for its profits; the new school grabs a value wherever it can. It's give and take in the old school; it's graft in the new. We take from the people mostly, because they're the easiest, but we'd just as leave take from the individual when he isn't looking. Next to land and franchises corporate securities are the easiest to juggle and unload on the people. It's an easy game when you learn it, and the only regular ante is for lawyer's fees. But you couldn't play that game—it's not in your blood.

Mead. I don't want to play it. I'm going to stay right here and fight out this thing. There are some decent men in the world.

Kane. O, we're all decent, Allen—more or less—but we all need the money. Even Thomas is decent, according to his light.

Mead. He doesn't need the money.

Kane. No; it's worse with him. He has it.

Mead. Well, he can't bully the whole town with his money.

Kane. Can't he?

Mead. I'll go to the newspapers. They're keen for sensations. "Prominent and Wealthy Citizen Tries to Railroad His Broker to the Penitentiary"—that's a story, isn't it? I know some of the press men.

Kane. Allen, you shock my sense of proportion.

Mead. Financial proportion, I suppose you mean?

Kane. Exactly. You couldn't get one line in any city paper against Cyril Thomas. He's immune.

Mead. That's absurd.

Kane. Who owns the Second Avenue department store?

Mead (askance). Well——Thomas——?

Kane. How much advertising does that store give to each paper every day?

Mead is silent.

Kane. About a page a day, isn't it?

Mead (gloomily). O—I guess you're right.

Kane. I am right. Thomas could burn your eyes out in the public street in broad daylight, and go scot-free of press censure.

Mead. Is the press so low as that?

Kane. The press needs the money—couldn't run a day without it—couldn't get it if it displeased its advertisers. It isn't a matter of high or low, but of money.

Mead. God! You'd reduce the solar system to money.

Kane. I couldn't. Civilization has forestalled me—and made a very thoro job of it—tangled up the whole skein of life in money—hasn't it?

Mead. No; I can't see it so dismal as that.

Kane. Because your vision is in your heart instead of your head. You are seeing things as you want them to be. I see them as they are.

Mead. Or maybe I'm feeling realities, while you are sensing appearances.

Kane. I pass, Allen. That's beyond me. But you'd better be planning to leave town. That's a reality.

Mead. What! Sneak off like a guilty man?

Kane. Or stay and be convicted as one.

Mead. I can't. It's impossible. Conviction, disgrace, anything but flight. Why, I couldn't look myself in the face if I ran away now.

Kane. You'll not have a chance to look at your face if you stay here—unless you can smuggle a mirror into jail.

Mead. Bosh! They can't convict me; I'm innocent.

Kane. There are thousands of innocent men in prison. It's easier to convict an innocent man than a guilty one, as a rule—and just as profitable to those who get their living that way.

Mead. But I can't turn and run under fire, Martin. It isn't in my blood.

Kane (*reflecting*). No—caution isn't in your blood. Well, the indictments won't come thru for a couple of weeks yet. I'll put up cash bail for you—then we'll see. But, pshaw! I haven't enough money to beat Thomas in his own town . . . How did he get his money? I don't seem to remember him.

Mead. The unearned increment. He came here years ago and bought at acre prices land that's now worth a thousand dollars a front foot.

Kane. Did he put up any buildings?

Mead. No; only a few shacks and tenements. He hung on to the ground and let others do the building. Now he's practically running the town with the values that the people created for him and which their labor is paying him.

Kane. H'm—you said that before, Allen.

Mead. Well, it's a good thing to say. The oftener it's said the quicker it will be heeded.

Kane. And then what?

Mead. The people will take their own, the land will be open, and poverty cease.

Kane. Not in this era—not while every intelligent man in America dreams of getting rich. Your social ideals are illusions—all ideals are illusions.

Mead. On the contrary ideals are the most real things.

Kane. You never get them?

Mead. We never get anything else. All we have today is but the ideal of yesterday. Everything is an ideal before we attain it—and having attained it we seek another ideal. The ideal is something better—that's all.

The Indian who grinds his arrowhead sharper is realizing an ideal.

Kane. And having made his better arrowhead he finds it doesn't satisfy. It wasn't what he wanted, after all.

Mead. You slander the Indian. Having made a better arrowhead he doesn't sit around the rest of his life and admire it. He uses it to kill a bigger deer, and with its skin he builds a better house. And in the better house he works on bigger plans, for larger ideals. It's only the white man who pulls his last ideal down from the sky and shuts his life up in a little circle of sensation and emotion.

Kane. What is there beyond reason or feeling?

Mead. There must be much that transcends all we now know—faculties and worlds that lie beyond the range of sense perception.

Kane. Well, I'm glad you've fallen in love, Allen.

Mead. Why not rise in love?

Kane. Because it is a fall . . . usually.

Mead (*suspiciously*). How did you come to add that "usually?"

Kane. I can leave it out, if you insist.

Mead. No leave it in, for *both* of us. But why are you so glad about *me*?

Kane. Something had to happen to chain you down to earth. These faculties beyond sense perception—they have wings, haven't they?

Mead. They are wings, Martin—the soul's wings—and without them life would be of little worth.

Kane (*moodily*). I don't know that it *is* of any worth. . . . But I suppose a man really gets what he wants—what he really wants, I mean.

Mead. I wonder—

Kane (*is sitting lazily in the big easy chair center*). Yes—men get what they really want. Even you could get money if you wanted it.

Mead. I don't see much connection between wanting money and getting it. Almost everybody wants it—and how few get it!

Kane (*slowly*). As many as want it enough to pay its price.

Mead (*thoughtfully, half reclining on the lounge*). The price of money! What is its price, Martin? . . . You ought to know.

Kane (*as he speaks dreamily the lights fall and slowly a blue haze pervades the room, blurring all outlines. It thickens till it wraps everything in an impenetrable cloud, and Kane's voice seems far away*) The price of money! the price of money Few know what it is—and fewer still are ready to pay Some inherit—some are lucky, but the millions buy their money in

the open market . . . It's the most expensive thing on earth—and few can afford to buy more than a pit-tance.

A D R E A M

The thick blue mist thins out to a less opaque mid-summer green, and as outlines grow perceptible the scene looks like a little garden clearing at the edge of a deep, mysterious primal forest, with huge trees and dense foliage at the sides and back.

A figure rises in front and paces back and forth. It is doubtless **Kane**, though the mist is too thick to see clearly.

A form to the right arises, which resembles **Mead** sitting on a grass covered bank.

Kane (*his voice sounds strangely heavy and distant*). I am Life, with a million dollars to sell to the highest bidder. O, men of earth. What bid ye for a million dollars, all coined in luring gold, or hid in bonds that hold a death grip on human toil? The sale's begun—what bid ye?

Many Voices (*coming low and musical, sounding far away, some plaintive, others insistent, sad, gay, hopeful, despairing*). Wishes! Hopes! Longings! Dreams! (*The voices repeat and mingle, and finally expire in a tremulous threnody*.)

Kane. I hear the whispering of poets, the crooning of women and the soft voices of children. But not for them was coined red gold. 'Tis a full million . . . an I hear no bid . . . ?

Different Voices (*mingling, yet distinct*). I'll work unceasingly. I'll moil and worry for it—give joy, and health and peace—

Kane (*scornfully*). Not so is won a million. Cottage furniture and wholesome food do often fetch a higher price.

Three Strident Voices. Pride is bid! I'll cringe and live in fear. I'll wear a mask and numb the heart!

Kane (*scornfully*). These buy but modest homes in Smugville with trailing vines on porch and graphaphone in the parlor. It's wealth I'm selling—a million dollars. Bid lively!

Many Voices. I'll lie! Cheat! Steal! Give honor, decency, manhood! (*Kane waves them all aside derisively, till one, louder than all, shouts*): I'll murder for it!

Kane (*quickly*). At last. A fair bold bid is murder, and the voice sounds like a man's. But it wins scant gold in these times when men are butchered by machinery. Back to the grave, Borgia! Make way for a child slaver!

Voice. I'll deceive my dearest and closest friend.

Kane (*laughs in derision*). That wins no money. It's the price of an intrigue with a neighbor's wife. Not

soul affinities, I offer, but minted gold with a drop of blood on every coin! Do I hear no bid for a million dollars?

Wild Sobbing Voice. I'll give my soul for it!

Kane. The bid's rejected. Man who'd sell their souls have none, and they who buy are swindled. 'Tis an honest sale, my friends. A million dollars! What am I bid!

Stern Voice (in the distance). I'll give everything else in life for it!

Kane (thoughtfully). 'Tis a good bid—. But, stay! that's the price of Just Love Entire—and this is gold—the sweat and blood of men! Ah, me! the times are hard—I'll let it go No; wait. I see a looming shape. (*From the depths of the forest slowly emerges a huge figure that seems to grow smaller as it advances. When it reaches the clearing it is well enough defined to be recognizable as Cyril Thomas.*) Mayhap it knows the value of a million. (*Warningly*) Going! a million—going—!

Thomas (ponderously). I'll make it first in life!

Kane. Sold! Nor heaven nor hell could keep great wealth from such a bid. (*The atmosphere suddenly thickens again. Nothing is visible but a dense gray cloud, out of which Kane's voice comes thickly and dreamily.*) The gold is yours That's the price of money Those who pay, get it (*Quickly the mist clears, the Dream is ended, and the room and its two occupants are as before.*)

Kane (rousing). The trouble with you, Allen—

Mead (sitting). We weren't talking of trouble, but of money.

Kane. They're the same. The trouble is that you're worshiping a far-away God.

Mead (rubbing his eyes). Strange; I could swear I saw Thomas there. I almost dozed an instant.

Kane. Wake up. I say you're a heretic to the only true God.

Mead (still dazed). The God money, you mean?

Kane. Your acumen this evening is quite startling.

Mead. I can't imagine a more distant God than money, for most people.

Kane. His presence is invisible to the unfaithful, but his influence is ever with us, my son. Hast never felt the nearness of his almighty effulgence?

Mead. Daily, father, his stamped and milled omniscience is uppermost in my commercial heart.

Kane. Your commercial heart is somewhat less expansive than the sea, Allen. Thou'rt an unbeliever.

Mead. You're a faithful priest of the nearby God, Martin.

Kane. Nay, but an humble wandering mendicant.

Mead. Not so, father. I count thee a high priest of the inner temple.

Kane. Alas! no, my son And that's the hell of it, Allen. I ought to be worth a few millions right now.

Mead. Ugh! What would you do with it?

Kane. I'd clean Thomas out of this town. I'd buy over his head—and make it possible for you to stay here Alas! I have wasted my talents in riotous ways! I have wandered off among the false Gods. In my youth I was unrighteous. Behold me with a hundred thousand or so—little better than a pauper—now, when I could use real money, if I had it. But my hand against millions! It's out of the question. It needs a superior force to combat Thomas.

Mead. Don't brains and intelligence count?

Kane. Only money will buy legal cunning and technical trickery. . . . An ocean voyage would do you and Grace both good, Allen.

Mead. Well, well, we'll think no more of it tonight Perhaps I must worship the true God a little harder.

Kane. Thou speakest well, my son. Bless thee! May his radiance be cast about thee and guide thee in the narrow paths of collateral righteousness.

Bell Boy (*looks in*). Mister Kane—

Kane. Right here.

Mead. Ahmen!

Kane (*reading card from Bell Boy*). No—ah woman, it appears—to see the holy father of dollars. (*To Bell Boy*). Show her in here. (*Bell Boy goes*). Allen, disappear, please. Will see you in the lobby.

Mead (*going*). All right. And then suppose we have a glimpse of the woman of Tony's? I'm curious. You never did show me.

Kane. No—not tonight.

Mead. But you were so anxious that I should see her. Have you forgotten?

Kane. I wish you'd forget, Allen.

Mead (*seriously*). I think she means a good deal to you, Martin—

Kane is silent as **Mead** passes out.

Marian enters

Kane (*greets her impulsively*). Marian.

Marian (*quietly*). I wanted to see you.

Kane. You know I'm proud of that, don't you—of your wanting to see me?

Marian. You have been a great comfort I need a friend now.

Kane (*eagerly*). And you come here—to me—?

Marian. Yes. I haven't found many friends.

Kane. The strong seldom do. It isn't meant that they should—

Marian. By whom isn't it meant?

Kane. Oh, that's just language, like Allen uses. No one plans anything, so far as I can see.

Marian. Isn't there a God?

Kane. He hasn't revealed himself to me.

Marian. Nor to me.

Kane. God is what men worship——and that is money.

Marian. But over and above it all, isn't there a Being who rules and plans things? Sometimes I'd like to think there was.

Kane. I'd like to find a God for you, Marian—but I don't know where to look. You haven't been much of a leaner in your life, yet the deep charm of the woman nature that seeks a God outside itself is strong in you. If I thought the heavens held a God, I'd search him out for you.

Marian. Don't you crave for something wiser and stronger than yourself to lean on—sometimes?

Kane. Not often. I must get strength out of myself—or go without it. That's life.

Marian (*inwardly groping; his words sound like a doom, and she almost staggers—then, with a pathos which he doesn't notice immediately*): O! there must be something in the universe wiser than man!—some higher, diviner thing!

Kane (*abstraeted: instinctively he senses her trouble, and for days has been pondering it, but with masculine obtuseness does not realize its nearness*). Well, it isn't woman.

Marian (*smiling wearily*). No; it isn't woman.

Kane. And whatever it is, it doesn't bother its head about you and me—its head or its heart.

Marian (*in pain*). O! it hasn't a heart, I am sure, or such things couldn't be!

Kane. What things, Marian? What things? (*Takes her hand*) Of course you didn't come here just to talk. Something has happened. Can I help?

Marian (*staggers slightly*). Thomas . . . Grace . . .

Kane. I saw it coming. Now he forces Does he threaten?

Marian. Exposure.

Kane. Of course. (*Turns away, deep in thought, and then*): But even that—have you considered it?

Marian. Death is better—kinder, I am sure. Is it wrong to take her life?

Kane. You don't mean that?

Marian. There is nothing else. I can see nothing.

Kane. No—no! This is beyond belief. This isn't the middle ages. We're not serfs of the Cencis and Borgias!

Marian. We are serfs of money.

Kane (*rebelliously*). Not to the point of buying virgins! not to the point of life and death.

Marian (*calmly*). Virgins are bought and sold every day in this city.

Kane (*not heeding*). Why, this is America—a Twentieth century republic—not Rome or Venice in the dark ages. We are dreaming—living in some past existence—dimly recalling old horrors! We will wake. Such things can't happen now!

Marian. They happen every day, Martin. This isn't an unusual case.

Kane (*excitedly*). But it can't happen to you! I'll expose him! drive him out of town! I'll pillory him to the scorn of decent people. I'll spend every cent I have! .

Marian. Unless you have a great deal more than him it would do no good. He has his own way here. Unless you could purchase those who serve him—

Kane. Even that I'll do!

Marian. And even then—no, Martin, you'd have to change the whole scheme of things to alter this. I am one of many.

Kane (*for an instant hopeless*). True! true!

Marian. To know—that her mother was—her own mother was—a—

Kane (*taking both her hands, speaking fiercely*) That her mother was a prostitute! It's true. Let's face it. Can't we show her that all the world's in the same traffic—men and women alike? Some sell their talents, their mentality! Some sell their friends, their love, and their manhood! The many sell but their health, their sweat, the blood of their hearts, or the strength of their bodies—but all sell! all sell! and not one in ten thousand sell so nobly as you have sold! Can't we show her that, and laugh at Thomas and his wealth? It's true! All life is buy and sell! It's true—true as hell! true as daily life!

Marian. Ah! can you see things in a big way like that?

Kane. Yes; when life brings it home to us—then we see.

Marian. No; some never see.

Kane. They will.

Marian. Perhaps—in flashes—as we see it now. But the vision soon fades. We go back to the day's round—and what the neighbours say, that is what counts in a woman's life She is better dead in my arms than to know the truth of her mother's life O! is there no God!

Kane. There are times when some other than a money God would be handy, Marian.

Marian (*bitterly*). But we never think so till need drives us. We might have found one—

Kane. None that would shape events for us.

Marian (*pleadingly*). But one that might show us the way out of our tangles?

Kane. I have no such faith.

Marian. Nor I such a light. Only it might be—I don't know. (*Wringing her hands*) No—you couldn't win over Thomas—nor change the scheme of life—and God won't help! But it's hard to—to—O! I must!

Kane. No; you can't do that. There's *some* other way. You and she could leave the city—hide—

Marian. You can't hide from money. The Pinkerton force of the world is at his command. I knew a girl who ran away. I helped her. She went to Brazil. They brought her back. She was stubborn—and died in jail—died of shame.

Kane. I could hide you.

Marian. They would kill you.

Kane. Small matter of that.

Marian. But the life of a fugitive. How could it be explained to Grace and her father? I think of him, too. He's the only man I ever knew, Martin—but you. He's weak and the world despises him—and the old romance is gone—but he's a bigger man to me than any of the money men I scorned for him.

Kane. You were as bad as Allen. That's the trouble with you people—you don't learn the value of money till it's too late to get it by the established rules of prostitution—and then you get all tangled when you do wake.

Marian (*grimly*). That's true—but I'm not complaining I sold a good deal for money, much more than I intended, it seems—but *I didn't sell love*.

Kane. You should have sold that first. It brings the best price.

Marian (*after a pause*). Death is not expensive.

Kane. Next to human life it's the cheapest thing on earth.

Marian (*meditatively*). Yes everything else would mean exposure There's no way but the one—

Kane (*calmly*). Then kill him instead of her.

Marian. That wouldn't be any use. It would be to kill her as well—and after she had known. My life has been to save her. Must it be for nothing? No, she must die but once—not slowly of deceit and dread as I have been dying. It can't be that I have done this thing to no purpose. (*Vehemently*) It shall not be! (*She is silent a moment. Kane is deep in thought, his face hidden in his hands. Almost vaguely, yet with*

harshness and defiance she slowly speaks): I have had no real shame for my life. It has been as clean as the world would let me keep it I sold, but only at my own price, at my own time, and of my own will. I have held myself aloof when I would—and been a slave to no man. My life has been freer than that of women who sell themselves for life. I married for love, and was free. I sold myself—and still was free O! it's all right—all but the lies, the constant deceit!

Kane. Do women hate to lie?

Marian. Not the petty lying, the little lies that save from scoldings—not the lies of the flirt or the drudge—these are easily learned. But the big lies—the huge deceits of a double life—the constant fear of detection! It has been a long nightmare! It has broken me. My woman's nature has changed.

Kane. It has grown richer.

Marian. No; it has grown harder—that is all. (*They are silent—then she, meditatively*): But he must never know. I owe him that and am glad to pay it. And she must die but once—and unknowing. She shall fall asleep in my arms. Isn't it better that way?

Kane is silent.

Marian (*calmly*). That's right, Martin. No one can decide for another. One is always alone at the crisis.

Kane. Alone! God! how alone you have stood in life! I see you as a huge gray statue of the world's woe standing high above the writhing human mass!

Marian (*slowly*). You could procure the death certificate? It will be expensive—

Kane. Don't, don't talk of expense—to me! But can it be purchased? Physicians are harder to reach?

Marian. Money will reach anything in this city—even that? But it will cost—

Kane. O! if it cost life—(*he stops suddenly*.) But don't decide yet.

Marian. Fate decides for me—leaves me no choice. I only bow In her sleep—in my arms It will be beautiful. I shall envy her Death is beautiful!

Kane. To you or me, perhaps. But not to her. (*A pause*). Is the time short?

Marian. A day or two.

Kane. Delay a week.

Marian. Why delay? O, it's no use! It would be a terrible risk.

Kane. Lie to him, put him off, have her sick. Give me a week! Wait and hope for a week!

Marian. I dare not.

Kane. You must! You trust me, Marian?

Marian. Doesn't it seem so?

Kane. No man was ever more richly rewarded than he who gains your trust. Her confidence is the most that any woman has to give—and it's more than a man ever gains—and keeps, in this world I have yours, Marian—

Marian. You have—completely.

Kane. I would keep it.

Marian. You could hardly loose it, Martin.

Kane. I shall not lose it. (*He is silent; then, weighing his words*): Of course, she mustn't die: that's not right. Life is sweet to her—a fascinating mystery that lures. It's still a mystery for all of us—but for some the lure is gone. She must live. There is an alternative.

Marian. I read your heart, Martin.

Kane (*hastily*). Don't do it! Don't! You must leave me alone!

Marian (*takes his hands and searches him with her gaze*). Is life so little to you, then?

Kane (*answering her look*). It is more to me now than it ever was before—but perhaps *I know better where to find it*.

Marian (*her face brightening*). I understand you. (*They are gazing intently in each other's eyes.*)

Kane (*slowly*). I don't find death there—but life!—life!—and something more!

Marian (*an intense thrill passing over her*). Can it be that this—this—is life?

Kane. It—is—more—than—life! You—will—wait—a week—Marian?

Marian. Yes. (*Their eyes are fixed on each others' and their hands clasped, almost at arm's length, as the Curtain falls.*)

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

Time: A week later.

Scene: Living room of the Wilson home in an apartment house at 41st and Oak streets—one of those "modest and sanctified homes" into which the "heresies of social discontent" have not entered. The main entrance is about center of background. To the right is a bay window looking out on Oak street, and here **John Wilson** is cosily ensconced in a rocker, his feet on an opposing chair, his head thrown back, his spectacles on his forehead, and the evening paper slipped from his hands. Left of center in front is a table with

electric lamp rising above it. On the table is a silver ice water tank and three glasses on a tray. In the left upper corner is the telephone on a small writing desk. To left front is a piano, and between the piano and the telephone is a door to another room. Otherwise the furnishings are very tasteful, but more pronounced for comfort than for elegance.

As the curtain rises

Grace enters

from door at left, tiptoes across the room, and steals up behind her father.

Grace. We're to go to the roof garden tonight, father—just you and I—what a lark!

Wilson (rousing). My, my, child! that's expensive.

Grace. No, it isn't. The tickets didn't cost us anything and the carfare and ice cream are my treat. Any way, it's mother's orders. She says you need the excitement.

Wilson. That mother of ours is a wonderful manager.

Grace. We have quite a respectable income now that I'm working.

Wilson. Yes, you're a big help . . . Ah, we've lost our girl—

Grace. No, you haven't, father; here she is (*her arms about his neck*).

Wilson. It's a great big woman now. She came and stole away a tiny girl that used to climb on my lap. What have you done with her, woman?

Grace. A big giant came and ate her up, father.

Wilson. Yes, the giants eat up all the children.

Grace. Would you rather have the little girl or the big girl, daddy?

Wilson. I'd keep 'em both if I could — the one of four and the one of sixteen. I'd trade you off for those two girls.

Grace. Neither of them could take you to the roof garden tonight.

Wilson. How the child does talk! I'll take *you* to the roof garden, Miss Wilson, if you'll promise not to look at any other young man. . . But where is Allen?

Grace. He sent the tickets. He couldn't go.

Wilson. So I'm only second choice—I see . . When is it going to be, Grace?

Grace. When is what going to be?

Wilson. Aren't you a hypocrite to ask that?

Grace. What's your hurry? You seem dreadfully anxious to get rid of me.

Wilson. I want to see (*pulls down her head and whispers*) the baby.

Grace is eloquently and blushingly silent.

Wilson. Allen's a fine fellow, but he hasn't much money, I guess.

Grace. Who cares if he hasn't?

Wilson. Ah, that's just like your mother. She was a stylish girl, but they couldn't make her marry for money—

Grace. Now don't you go reminiscing, father. You have to be young tonight and wear your dress suit and flirt with me.

Wilson. Think of it—a seventy-five dollar a month clerk with an evening suit!

Grace. You're always thinking about our income! The legacy that Aunt Maggie left helped lots. We're not so poor.

Wilson. Poor! I should think not. Why, we're rich, with such a manager. . . . It's strange, Grace—I often think of that—how Aunt Maggie could leave us anything.

Grace. She didn't leave it to us; she left it to mother.

Wilson. But she never liked your mother.

Grace. Maybe that's why she did it—to ease her conscience before she died. Fancy anybody not liking our mother!

Wilson. But your Aunt Maggie had nothing. She was poor. How could she—?

Grace. O, well, she did. Isn't that enough?

Wilson. Yes—yes—of course; that's enough.

Grace. I know why she left it, father.

Wilson. Why?

Grace. Because she couldn't take it with her.

Wilson (*smiling, but thoughtful*). Ah, yes; but where did she get it to leave?

Grace. Oh, that's the least of our troubles. We've spent it. I kept in school on it.

Wilson (*resignedly*). Yes; that's the least of our troubles . . . Perhaps I'll get a raise soon.

Grace. Now, now, father, don't be worrying your head about money. Mother says our income is enough, and there's a little in the bank.

Wilson. Such a manager! Isn't she wonderful? I haven't done my share. My salary wouldn't go very far in the hands of any other woman.

Housekeeper (*an elderly woman, appears at hall doorway rear*). Some one to see your mother, Miss, and she ain't back yet.

Grace. Who is it?

Housekeeper. Mr. Thomas, he says his name is.

Grace (*aside*). The old beast!

Wilson (*looks askance at Grace*). Better show him in here, I suppose. I don't know him. (*Rises*).

Grace. I must go and dress. Don't be late, father. (*Exits left*).

Thomas enters—

shown in by the Housekeeper who immediately goes.

Wilson. Good evening, sir.

Thomas (*perspiring and fanning with hat*). Good evening. Mrs. Wilson is not at home?

Wilson. Have a chair, please. Won't you have a glass of ice water (*pours and hands*).

Thomas (*sits to right of table*). It's warm.

Wilson (*returns to his rocker, drawing it closer Thomas*). My wife is at Mrs. Markham's. She'll be back soon. Are you acquainted with Miss Markham, Mr. Thomas—did I understand?

Thomas (*nods assent and helps himself to more water*) I don't believe I know Miss—er—Makam, did you say?

Wilson. Markham, sir. My wife visits her a great deal. A very worthy lady of means, I believe, who is interested in the Home for Boys.

Thomas. Ah, yes—a very commendable charity. My errand with your wife is in that connection.

Wilson. O, then I know she'll be pleased to see you.

Thomas. I trust so. Ahem—(*The conversation languishes till Wilson picks up evening paper*)

Wilson (*reading*). "Socialism Breaks Up a Home"—h'm—

Thomas. Yes; these new fangled theories threaten all our American institutions.

Wilson (*honestly seeking*). Is that so? I really don't know what socialism is, Mr. Thomas.

Thomas. You're better off for not knowing. A man's head shouldn't be filled with such rubbish.

Wilson (*disappointed*). O, then you can't tell me about it. I'd like to know—

Thomas (*candidly*). I can truthfully say I know nothing about socialism. I've no patience with these anarchistic theories.

Wilson (*bewildered*). Is socialism anarchistic?

Thomas (*tartly*). All these new fangled theories are the same. They must be suppressed.

Wilson (*hopefully*). I suppose you know *something* about them?

Thomas. Not a thing. I wouldn't bother my head with them.

Wilson (*timidly*). You know they're evil?

Thomas. That's quite different. A man should always be able to distinguish right from wrong.

Wilson (*rebuked*). Y—es; I suppose so—(*Picks up paper and presently reads*): "Free lovers"—

Thomas. Yes—these socialists are all free lovers.

Wilson. That was in another column I was reading—

Thomas. O, it's all the same. All these wild ideas are a menace to existing conditions.

Wilson (*meekly*). Y—e—s. (*Musingly*) But love is always free, isn't it—like air and sunshine, I should think----?

Thomas. Such things must be regulated by law.

Wilson. But you can't love by law, can you? I don't need a law to love anybody.

Thomas (*severely*). It is quite disgusting, this idea of free love. We have our marriage laws to uphold.

Wilson (*dubiously*). O—the marriage laws!—but I thought they regulated property. Do the marriage laws regulate love?

Thomas. O, they're all the same—property, love and marriage.

Wilson (*quite astonished*). Is that so?

Thomas (*sententiously*). Yes; they're all one in law. The law is a very deep study.

Wilson. Isn't it, now? It's all a tangle to me. I never could understand the law That's funny, now (*laughs*)—It's made for the poor and they don't know what it is—. It's bad to be poor—

Thomas. O, it's good for others than the poor. I use it frequently.

Wilson. Do you? (*A pause: reading paper again*) I wish they could make a law giving all these poor people plenty work—

Thomas. That's socialistic talk. There's always work in this country for the willing.

Wilson. It says in the paper here, "Five thousand men and 3,000 boys laid off at the coal mines"—and here, it says, "Families in want"—

Thomas. That's all newspaper talk. These men could get something to do if they were willing to work. The trouble is that the people have exaggerated ideas of the pay they should receive. Now when I was a young man I was glad to work for eight dollars a month.

Wilson (*sizing up his good clothes and watch job*). But you got a raise soon?

Thomas. I saved my money and got ahead. With my first \$300 I started in the hardware business.

Wilson. That was good. But you couldn't start in business now with \$300, could you—with all the big stores?

Thomas. Conditions have changed, of course, and our working classes must learn to adapt themselves to the changes. It is their extravagance that causes their poverty.

Wilson (*dubiously*). I suppose so. But it's hard for a salaried man to get along sometimes. Now I've been with our firm over twelve years. I started at \$40 a month. Well, I may get another raise soon.

Thomas (*comfortingly*). We should each fill the station in which Providence has placed us.

Wilson. But a man ought to try to get a larger salary —don't you think?

Thomas. If he can do so without disturbing existing

conditions, but I always maintain that the proper spirit for a loyal American citizen is to accept uncomplainingly the responsibilities of his sphere in life.

Wilson (*thoughtfully*). I've worked hard all my life The high salaried places are so few, and there are so many of us in the low salaried places Well, I'm not complaining—

Thomas. You evince a very proper spirit, Mr. Wilson. I always commend it to my employes.

Wilson (*looking up*). Have you many employes?

Thomas (*patronizingly*). O, yes; a good many. In the department store alone there are over a thousand.

Wilson (*greatly surprised*). O, this is Mr. Thomas of the Second Avenue Department Store?

Thomas (*with dignity*). You are quite right—and of the Land Syndicate, the Water Corporation, the Gas and Electric Company. I am active in a number of interests.

Wilson (*awed*). I hope you will pardon—my—ah—I had no idea.

Thomas (*magnanimously*). Don't mention it. Perhaps I could manage to find you a better position. There may be a vacancy—say for a hundred a month—

Wilson (*eagerly*). I should be very grateful.

Thomas. Perhaps I can manage it. I must confer with Mrs. Wilson first about—about this charitable institution. I hope to enlist the interest of your daughter, also, in that.

Wilson. I am sure you will find them both anxious to assist in charitable work. My wife has been very much interested in this home for boys. Its affairs call her away very often, sometimes most unexpectedly. But as we are unable to contribute in any other way, I don't complain.

Thomas. That is the correct attitude. I trust you will always maintain it.

Wilson (*garrulously*). My wife does wonderfully well on our income. We live comfortably. I often wonder how she does it.

Thomas. Sometimes women have ways of their own of making both ends meet. I presume Mrs. Wilson is very economical. That is the keystone of true contentment. Always live on a little less than you earn. I was very economical when I was poor. That was the basis of my success.

Wilson. My wife is very economical—I suppose—or we couldn't get along so well on our small income. This has been a very happy home sir. We three pull together very well.

Thomas clears his throat and takes another drink. Again the conversation languishes and Wilson has recourse to the newspaper.

Wilson (*reading*). There has been a murder in the redlight district, I see. What we call our social evil must be a dreadful thing, Mr. Thomas—worse than socialism, isn't it?

Thomas (*tolerantly*). O, the social evil is rather a necessity. I don't regard it entirely an unmixed evil. It is a very time-honored institution, you know. We could hardly get along without it.

Wilson. But the poor souls who live such wretched lives—that always appeals to me.

Thomas. We must consider these matters from a broader standpoint.

Wilson. And not think of the poor creatures who have to live in such misery?

Thomas. That is mere sentimentality. Women who choose such lives have no cause to complain.

Wilson (*surprised*). Do they choose such lives? Do they go in the slums and redlight willingly?

Thomas. Why of course. How else could they get there? No one forces them.

Wilson (*timidly tenacious*). Well, I supposed hunger—poverty—the need of money drove them there.

Thomas (*sharply*). That is idle sentiment, Mr. Wilson. As practical men let us talk reasonably. Prostitution is like poverty, a necessary basis for a high state of civilization. Upon the firmness and stability of these lower strata, so to speak, is built the magnificent progress of the Twentieth century. Any attempt to disturb them must result disastrously upon our civilization.

Wilson (*confused*). Indeed—yes—er—

Thomas. We must be very careful not to unsettle existing conditions. It is the first duty of every patriotic citizen to uphold the glorious institutions that make this nation the refuge of the oppressed and downtrodden races.

Wilson (*exhibiting his almost inconceivable ignorance*). Is it really that, Mr. Thomas—a land of refuge for the oppressed?

Thomas (*pained and surprised*). Weren't you taught that at school? Isn't it printed and illustrated in all the school books?

Wilson. I hardly know, sir. The fact is I didn't go to school. I was too sickly. I learned to read at home—till I was strong enough to work.

Grace appears at door left trying to attract her father's attention.

Thomas. That was unfortunate. But you should have been taught to read out of the proper books.

Wilson. It was the Bible I learned out of.

Thomas. Well—ahem! A very good book. But the law must regulate these things and see that children

have the proper books. I must make a note of that for the legislative committee. (*Writes in memo book*)

Wilson (*secs Grace's signals*). Pardon me a moment, sir. (*Goes to Grace in doorway*)

Grace (*whispering*). You must come and dress now. Mother is here. (*Pulls him thru the door in spite of effort to go back and be polite to Thomas*) Both *Exit*

Marian enters

from door at back, comes down softly and stands before Thomas an instant before he is aware of her presence. When he turns and sees her she is Sphinxlike.

Thomas (*looks around and sees they are alone*). Are you trying to trick me?

Marian (*calmly*). The delay was unavoidable.

Thomas. I came to make a final enquiry. I don't like trouble and confusion—but you've lied to me.

Marian. Grace was ill. It was impossible.

Thomas. I was out of town. I got back today, and things are not as I paid for and as you agreed.

Marian. Everything is ready. This evening—

Thomas. No—you can't get the key now, and I've a business engagement.

Marian. Whatever time you set.

Thomas. I'm a man of few words. I act. If the girl's not there by 1 o'clock tomorrow I'll have you exposed in the press—and I'll get the girl anyway.

Marian. Very well.

Thomas. I have no faith in such women as you, but you ought to know my power here. You'll feel it. That's all. (*Turns to go*)

Kane enters

rear door and stands facing Thomas. The latter tries to pass Kane, but finds it impossible.

Thomas (*surprised*). Mr. Kane—

Kane (*searching for Thomas' eyes*). Good evening. (*Aside to Marian*) Go, at once, please and see that we're not disturbed. (*Marian exits right*) I wanted to speak with you, Mr. Thomas. We had better be seated.

Thomas (*advances toward door, but does not meet Kane's steady and piercing gaze*). I've no time now, Mr. Kane. Tomorrow. (*Looks at his watch*). I have an important board meeting.

Kane (*quietly*). No—tonight—now.

Thomas. This is not the time or place for a business talk. (*Tries to advance, but is balked by Kane's presence and steady gaze*). Step aside, there. I'm going out.

Kane (*quietly and firmly*). We are going to talk first. It needn't be about business.

Thomas (*contemptuously, tho evading Kane's glance*). Do you set your will against mine.

Kane. You have no will. You have only money.

Thomas. I have enough to fix you in this town.

Kane. The reign of money is over.

Thomas (*sneering*). Not in your lifetime, or mine.

Kane. The reign of money is over.

Thomas (*angrily*). Let me pass, there!

Kane. You can't pass while I stand here.

Thomas (*looks up threateningly, but drops his eyes before the steady, piercing gaze. Again he attempts to advance, raising his hand as tho to brush aside Kane. The latter's fixed gaze renders him powerless. He drops his hand, backs away a pace and sullenly grumbles*): Is this a rehearsal for private theatricals? I'm a busy man.

Kane. We are going to talk a little.

Thomas (*curious*). What about?

Kane. It's warm. Let's be seated.

Thomas (*again tries to meet Kane's eyes, fails, glares an instant at the frail form that opposes him, then contemptuously goes to the telephone. While he is trying to get central Kane locks the door and takes out the key*). Kane (*coming center*). You find it dead, don't you?

Thomas (*coming center*). Do you think it safe to oppose me in this city?

Kane (*still searching for Thomas' eyes*). We are isolated from your city now.

Thomas. Preposterous! We're living in a modern city, guarded by police. (*Meaningly*) You seem to forget that. (*Passes down to table and drinks*.)

Kane. I don't think I've forgotten anything. Two of the police commissioners are your appointees, and you control the third. The Mayor, most of the councilmen, the city attorney, the judiciary—about the whole city and county and most of the state is yours. Every one who wants to serve the people comes to you.

Thomas (*pridefully*). It's a well-governed city—more churches than saloons.

Kane. It's the tamest and most-governed city on the map—and you're its hidden, but real Czar.

Thomas (*with an approach to sarcasm*). Perhaps you exaggerate my importance in municipal affairs.

Kane. I couldn't. It is about absolute. I have taken the measure of this town and find you own a large part of it and control the rest. You are far too modest, Mr. Thomas.

Thomas. Whatever I have, I have earned.

Kane. Yes, I know all about that. I have *earned* a little myself. Your earnings are the increase of population, the sweat of interest, the honest toil of foreclosed mortgages, the industry of bribed officials, and the thrift of stolen franchises.

Thomas. Bah! Am I here to listen to such anarchistic talk? (*Goes toward bay window*).

Kane (*intercepting, reaches window first, lowers it*

and pulls down shade). Pretty quiet on Oak street—mostly tree tops. (Turns and again searches for Thomas' eyes. The latter quails and mores away)

Thomas. What does all this mean? (He is fearless and arrogant, but angry and perplexed at the strange situation).

Kane (quietly but forcefully). Let's be seated.

Thomas stubbornly resists the command and tries to glare at Kane. The latter motions with his hands and glares so fixedly at Thomas that in spite of himself he quails again and sinks into a chair beside the table.

Kane. You must stay here awhile and listen to me (looks at his watch) say till 9 o'clock. I want to talk to you about yourself. You have never thought much about yourself, have you?

Thomas. That's twaddle.

Kane. You're not much of a hypocrite, Thomas. You believe most of the platitudes you utter. But why do you lie about certain things and pretend to be different from what you are?

Thomas. Don't you know I can make you sweat for this? I thought you were a man of means and character.

Kane. I'm a man of your kind, Thomas—used to buying what I want.

Thomas. We make short work of anarchists and demagogues in this city.

Kane. We will pass that phase of the case temporarily I want to enquire why you and your friends don't gather into a private harem all the youngest daughters of the poor families, and train them for your exclusive amusement?

Thomas (insolently). Umph! Never thought of that.

Kane. Is that the only reason?

Thomas. O, it would be too expensive.

Kane. However, you'd do it if you wanted to?

Thomas. Why of course.

Kane. There's nothing to prevent you?

Thomas. What could there be?

Kane. Not the police, I suppose.

Thomas (sneering). I should say not.

Kane. Nor the law, in a general way?

Thomas (sincerely). I pay my legal expenses.

Kane. It might leak out thru the press?

Thomas. Not while I pay my advertising bills.

Kane. So you don't have public opinion to fear?

Thomas (contemptuously). What's public opinion?

Kane. There you have me, Thomas. I don't know what it is—except sound in a political speech. I suppose it's what the people think they think when they read your newspapers.

Thomas (petulantly). I don't know what you're driving at. (Goes to door left and tries it).

Kane (*takes out vial and empties few drops in glass which he sets in front of tank, putting back the other glasses*). You find the door locked, don't you? I said 9 o'clock. Then you will be free. Till then we must talk. Now about this private harem, or any other atrocity, you'd do it if you wanted to, I suppose.

Thomas. Why, of course.

Kane. But you haven't much time for amusements?

Thomas (*coming back to table*). Very little time.

Kane. You're kept pretty busy with your schemes?

Thomas (*innocently*). Wealth and power have great responsibilities.

Kane. I've noticed that. Keeps us busy telling other people how to be satisfied without wealth. And there's the task of piling up the millions, one on top of the other. How many millions have you?

Thomas. What's that to you?

Kane. O, nothing. I'm in a philosophical mood tonight. I'm wondering what you're going to do with them . . . when you die?

Thomas (*blanches an instant*). Who talks of death?

Kane. Why not? It's the only sure fact of life. How many of your millions can you take with you?

Thomas (*sneering*). Is this a sermon?

Kane. Maybe . . . What's the use in piling up all this money when you have to leave it so soon?

Thomas (*interested in spite of himself*). Well, what else is there to do? (*Seats himself at left of table*)

Kane. Did you ever see that play called Everyman?

Thomas. No; I've no time for theaters.

Kane. Well, this Everyman, when he comes to die, finds there is just one thing he can take with him. What do you suppose that is?

Thomas. H'm. I don't know.

Kane. His Good Deeds.

Thomas. How does he know he can take them?

Kane. It's all acted out on the stage. Good Deeds goes down in the grave with him.

Thomas. Pshaw! That's only a play.

Kane. But it looks reasonable, doesn't it?

Thomas. Well, I'm liberal to the churches.

Kane (*turns away in disgust*). Ah, I forgot. You pay your way. I suppose you'll buy the best seat in heaven?

Thomas. You're insolent. I won't stand this catechising. (*Again he tries to meet Kane's eyes, but fails and looks nervously at his watch.*)

Kane. It isn't 9 o'clock yet.

Thomas (*pours water in doctored glass and is about to drink*). It's warm here.

Kane (*aside*). Not yet (*Puts hand over glass*) There's a fly in that. Take this (*handing another glass*)

Thomas (*drinks*). By God! you'll pay for this. I don't know what it all means unless you have an interest in that board meeting. But I'll make you pay!

Kane. I am willing to pay, Thomas. I have computed to the last farthing the possible cost of defying you. We do pay for what we get. Did *you* ever think of that?

Thomas. I always pay my way.

Kane. Yes; I forgot. I'm always wandering off on the notion that there may be something that money won't pay for.

Thomas. It will pay for the neck stretching of you anarchists.

Kane. You're right there, Thomas, about the anarchist. But I'm the kind that spells chaos instead of freedom. I'm a sitter-in at your own game. The whole money power will soon be face to face, not with the dreamers of universal peace, but with its own kind driven to the wall.

Thomas. That's all Greek.

Kane (*musing*). It's Greek meeting Greek. It's the anarchy of money meeting the anarchy of violence. Some of us have bowels of compassion and hearts for other things than counting money. So we fall behind in the game, and wake up to find your hands on our throats. Then there's no choice but to cut and hack our way out. The rule of money will be overthrown by its own slaves, when enough of them are driven mad.

Thomas. I don't know what you're talking about.

Kane. Can't you see that we have to pay for our money.

Thomas. That's foolish. Money buys things, but whoever heard of buying money?

Kane. Ah, not the deaf and the blind, surely. But money is purchased, Thomas. Everyone pays—
(A door is heard to open and close and heavy steps fall on the stairs)

Thomas (*perspiring*). It's awful hot here.

Kane (*looks at watch*). It's about 9. I'll keep my word. You didn't attend that board meeting. (*Sets the doctored glass out and motions as tho he had just filled it, then pours out a glass for himself.*)

Thomas (*taking glass in hand*). Well, are you going to open the door now?

Kane (*raising glass*). The door will open presently.

Thomas is about to drink.

Kane (*staying him*). Listen, Thomas. You are going away from here now. I don't know where you're going, or when I'll see you again, if ever. You may think I took a mean advantage of you tonight—but I was up against the wall, your hand on my throat, and I had no alternative. (*Thomas makes sign of impatience*) If I see you again and you think I owe you anything,

I'll pay. Here's a pleasant journey to you. (*Both drink simultaneously*) You are free, old fellow, Adieu—

Thomas falls back while Kane is yet talking. A shudder passes over him, his face twitches for an instant, and then he remains quiet and limp. The steps are heard in the hall.

Kane hurriedly sprinkles Thomas coat with whiskey from a small pocket flask and pours the remainder in Thomas' empty glass. Lowers the light a little, then unlocks the door.

Marian re-enters
followed by Two Rough Looking Men.

Marian. These gentlemen say they had an appointment with you.

Kane. Quite right. (*Aside*) You needn't stay, Marian. (*Marian goes left. The men advance. Gives each handful of bills*). Well, here he is—too much whiskey. You boys drive him out on the Park road. Pick a dark place. Leave him in the bushes. There'll be a howl in the newspapers. But you'll get thru all right if you're careful and quick. If anything happens, he hailed you on the street, and is only drunk. Stick to that. Come and see me tomorrow. Walk him down easy, now. He's only drunk, remember.

The Men raise Thomas, one on each side, his arms over their shoulders and pretend to walk him out.

One of the Men (*thickly*). There, pard brace up. (*They pass out. Kane sees them down the hallway, then returns and watches them from the window.*

Marian re-enters
and goes toward window.

Kane (*turning*). Keep back. One of us is enough. (*Looks out again, then pulls down shade and leaves window*). They're off. I don't believe a soul saw them.

Marian (*after a pause*). How?

Kane (*shows vial*). Cyanide. It acts like lightning. (*Marian reaches for vial. He hands it to her silently —then*): I don't know whether there is life or death in that, Marian.

Marian. There is rest in it—soft, sweet rest—with no bills to meet and no lies to live.

Kane. Are you sure it means rest?

Marian. Very sure. It is sleep, quiet, deep sleep.

Kane. Yes; death is sleep. What else can it be? . . . And—then a new day? A better day, I wonder?

Marian. It will not be worse.

Kane. No; it couldn't be . . . And the long, silent rest . . . You have earned it, Marian. Your life has stood for the things that Allen talks about.

Marian. What are they, pray?

Kane. O, the impersonal life—forgetting one's self, and all that.

Marian. No; I had no such ideas.

Kane. Of course you hadn't. He has the ideas. You lived them.

Marian. I lived as I had to live. I did the things I thought would bring me the greatest—(grimly)—pleasure.

Kane. But you found this—pleasure—in usefulness I haven't found mine that way. I've had pleasure but I've lived my life for myself.

Marian. I don't believe that, Martin.

Kane. But it's true or was—till I met you. Then everything seemed different I don't understand it.

Marian. They say a woman's soul is a mirror in which a man finds himself reflected.

Kane. I'd like to believe that. I'd have a better opinion of myself, now But more often they say a woman hasn't a soul, and I'd rather think that of most women in whose eyes I have looked—that, too, would be more flattering to me.

Marian. Perhaps it is true. I suppose women like me can't have souls.

Kane (*takes her hand*). That is bitterness, Marian, and perhaps a touch of the world's hypocrisy. Yours is the richest life I have ever known—and when things are adjusted—

Marian. Are they ever adjusted?

Kane (*smiling*). I'm using language again, Marian. On a specified date, in a formal manner—

Marian. —standing in line before a white throne and hearing the account read out of a big book—as they taught in Sunday School?

Kane. No; that won't do. But things are adjusted. They adjust themselves and we really get what we want—what we want most.

Marian. Do we? (*Slowly the lights go down and the room becomes shadowy.*)

Kane. You wanted a crown and a halo right here on earth, Marian—and you've won both. There are thorns in the crown, but that's the kind you demanded of life. You might have had a crown studded with diamonds and sapphires, and magnesium light for a halo. But I think your choice was in better taste.

A soft golden light begins to envelop Marian, making hers the only conspicuous figure on the stage.

Marian (*gratefully*). I'm afraid my halo doesn't shine very brightly. Martin.

As Kane speaks all the light is centered about her head, like the halo which he sees.

Kane. Moles can't see the sun. But I see both the crown and the halo, Marian. They transfigure you in my eyes.

Marian. If you can see them, Martin—that's enough.

The light, still soft, envelopes them both as Kane searches her eyes intently.

Marian (*raptly*). There are no thorns in the crown, now.

Kane. I see in your eyes, Marian, more than I knew could be.

Marian. We have known each other—

Kane. —Always—

Marian. Always—it seems.

Kane. I haven't measured time since we met.

Marian. Did you see—the halo—from the very first?

Again the light plays about her head as a halo, for an instant.

Kane. No; I was blind still a mole. I could only feel. When you had gone the halo came, tho I didn't know what it was. A pale rose-hued mist was around the image of you that haunted me—till we met again—

Marian. We met again—so soon—so strangely . . . You were shocked—

Kane. No; the mist became a golden halo then. It rose between us. (*Steps back a pace out of the light*) It has kept us at arm's length.

Marian. It was all like a dream to me—

The room is quite dark now and the spot light is weak, making the two figures appear shadowy. At times a small powerful light illumines her head and shoulders. They are oblivious to all the world but each other, and the lights from the gallery attempt to portray them to the audience as they see themselves—alone, in a strange new sphere.

Kane (*continuing*) And it seemed to suggest—almost to reveal—something more in you than the Form of a Woman—and I hungered for it!

Marian (*eagerly*). And you found, Martin,—you found it—something more than the form—?

Kane (*reaching her hand again*). I found—I found it, Marian. (*Slowly*) I found what none may find—and keep—and live.

Marian. It's life itself you found, Martin And I found! I also found—

Kane (*quietly*). What, Marian?

Marian (*grarely*). A soul a man!

Kane (*after a pause kisses her hand reverently; then closer, searching her eyes*). What I see in your eyes, Marian, I'd die a thousand times to reach and touch!

Marian (*madly*). What's death? Why say death? All around is death? Lies—money—daily life is death! (*Her eyes luring him*) O! look deep! I show you more than life!

Kane (*his arm gently about her*). I see

. . . . (He gazes silently) And to enter is but to cease to die (Silently they regard each other. Footsteps sound outside: he leads her to chair right) Marian, we'll find what's back of life!

Marian (whispers eagerly as he leaves her). We'll die to live!

Kane turns up light and goes toward door.

Gradually the spot light fades and the room is normally lighted, tho dimly, as before.

Mead enters

He is excited and would speak.

Kane (interrupting). I expected you, Allen.

Mead. But not the news I bring—

Kane. I can guess it. Delay it for a moment—till I keep my word—and show you—the woman of Tony's.

Mead. O, I've lost all curiosity about her.

Marian (starts). Must that be?

Kane (aside to her). It is safer. Trust me—and Allen. I'll show him the halo—he can see. (To Mead) Revive your curiosity, old man. (Takes his hand) Come, I will show you a woman with a soul. (Leads him to **Marian**, who rises and stands neither abashed nor defiant). This, Allen, is the—woman of Tony's.

Mead (astonished, starts, profoundly moved, looks at her inquiringly). Is it true?

Marian. Yes.

Kane. Are words needed, Allen—explanations?

Mead. None. (Takes her offered hand and bows lowly to her. Rather staggers left and sinks in chair) The tragedy of Christianity.

Kane (goes to him and lays a hand on his shoulder). My boy, there's a halo about her. Can you see it? Look.

Again the small spot light plays around Marian's head, and there is pictured to the audience what Mead sees subjectively.

Mead. Yes—you're right. (Goes to **Marian**, takes both her hands, looking at her frankly) Mrs. Wilson—mother!

Marian (trembles a little, her eyes glisten). Allen—a mother's heart thanks you—a woman's soul, if it may be—(Presses his hands warmly, then as he turns back to **Kane**, softly): I have won. Life is kind. I have won.

Kane. Your news, Allen—(aside). My boys fumbled? I thought they would.

Mead. Thomas found dead in a cab on Park road—

Kane. Any arrests?

Mead. Two huskies. They're sweating them—hose ends and water—third degree—

Kane. The devil! I forgot that. (Goes to telephone) Is the 'phone in order, Marian?

Marian. Yes. What is it?

Kane (*has his number*). Captain Aldrich? This is Martin Kane. Yes. Those huskies you're sweating—not yet? Good! They know nothing about it. I'll be over to you with the right party, if you'll leave them alone. I was there. I know the whole thing. No; it was done in a saloon—quarrel over stock. Give me twenty minutes. I'll clear up the whole case. Yes—yes. Goodby.

Mead. You saw him killed?

Kane (*quietly*). I killed him as he sat in that chair.

Marian reaches for his hand silently.

Mead. It can't be true, Martin! You a murderer?

Kane. There was no other way. The power of his money rose before me like a mountain of granite. Ten drops of cyanide was the mystic mantram that removed the mountain. (*To Marian*) Better wash that glass. It's dangerous.

Marian takes the glass and goes.

Mead. But why? It wasn't worth it. I could have gone away—

Kane. He threatened Grace.

Mead. Grace——!

Kane. He had mother and daughter in a death grip. I had no alternative.

Mead (*grasping Kane's hand*). Martin! Martin! I can't talk—

Kane. Then don't; let me do the talking.

Mead. And Grace—

Kane. Hasn't an inkling of anything. It's up to you.

Mead (*still wringing Kane's hands*). My life for them both, Martin.

Kane. Your life (*aside, lightly*) and my death—and I the luckier.

Mead. Those men may confess. Let me—

Kane (*calmly*). Don't interfere, Allen. You'll spoil everything. The boys won't blab if I'm on time.

Mead. My God! Old man! they'll hang you!

Kane (*smiling*). They won't come within a mile of it.

Mead. But you left me out of it, Martin. I can't forgive you that.

Kane. You'll have to, Allen. Save yourself for greater ends. It's money against life the world over.

Mead. But it can't be righted this way, Martin. Blood solves nothing.

Kane. Still hoping to right things?

Mead. O, it's well to hope, I'm sure.

Kane. It's all that's left. Blood solves nothing, as you say, and neither side can win. Money battles against life and life battles to gain the thing that kills

it. If there is a hope it's in you dreamers who hold life worth more than money—in your children's children—perhaps.

Marian re-enters

and goes to **Kane** who is near the door.

Kane (*quickly changing to his old light cynicism*). Well, I must be getting over—a little private meeting that I really must attend. One little job and then—(*Sees their eyes moistening*) Say, it's damn bad taste for you two to be standing here like separate tales of woe. I'm going to tell the story of my life to a policeman pretty soon. (*More earnestly*) Cut it out. I mean it. Idle tears right no wrongs and cure no ills. Sentiment is easy and fades quickly. I'd rather be remembered longer and have fewer tears now. Besides, you need your wits for the next few hours. See my lawyers in the morning, Allen. I've lived my life and enjoyed every pang of it. What's finer than to end it when and how you will, laughing in the teeth of Fate, its master instead of slave?

Marian (*holding out her hand*). Martin—

Kane (*goes to her*). Marian, shall we struggle to live—perhaps to drift apart—and lose—?

Marian (*radiantly, the light again playing upon her*), It's more than life, we want, Martin!

Kane (*lightly, kissing her hand*). Queen of women, I salute you. (*Gazes at her intently as he backs toward door, turns an instant to Mead in passing, their hands meet*) So long, Allen. See you tomorrow, maybe.

Mead (*struggling*). You know, Martin—you know—

Kane (*at the door*). Every word of it, old man. (*His hand is on the door, he is looking in Marian's eyes.*) As we say in gay Paree, au revoir! (*The door bursts open,*

Grace and Wilson re-enter

She is dressed in white with large black scarf loosely about her shoulders. She is flushed with excitement. Wilson is in his evening suit.

Grace (*catches Kane as she enters and they whirl around in a dance. She stops to say*): O, you're all here. It was glorious, mother! O, such dancing—the Blue Danube! (*Kane catches her again and they waltz a strain*) The music and the motion just melt into one. Father, you know that—play a bar of Ase's death (*Wilson goes to piano*) Why, you just love death when you see her dance the death of Ase. (*Wilson plays and she imitates the closing scene of Ase's dance of Death from the Peer Gynt suite, dropping gracefully in a heap in the center of the room, her swirling black scarf coiled about her drooping head, as the curtain descends on the Last Act.*)

END OF THE PLAY

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